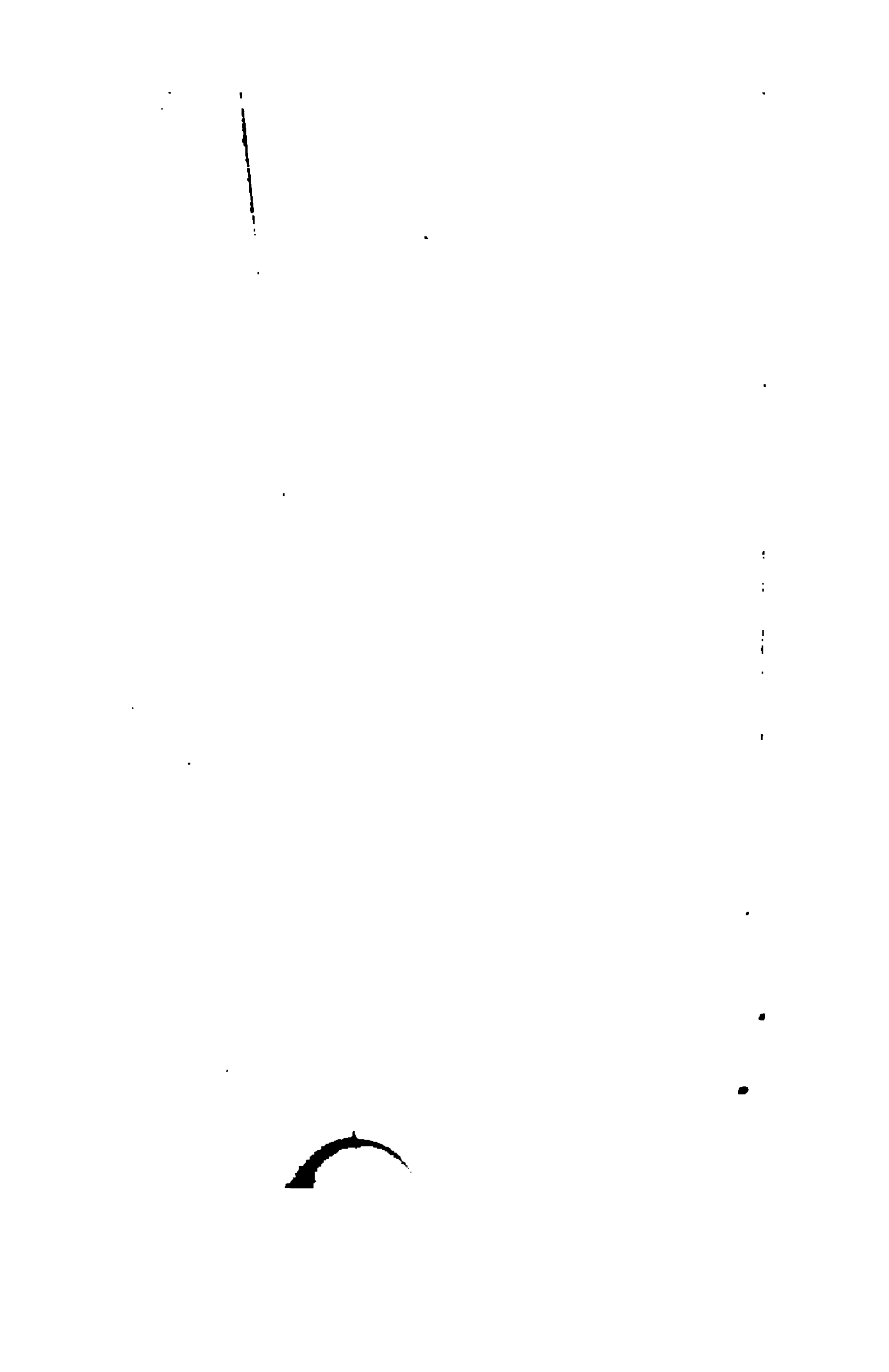




THE

Black Robber

A

ROMANCE.

THE

BLACK ROBBER;

A Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

EDWARD BALL.

I knew my fault, and feel my punishment
Not less because I suffer it unbent.
That thou wert beautiful, and I not blind,
Hath been the sin that shuts me from mankind.

LAMENT OF TASSO.

VOL I.

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DEDICATION.

To Mrs. ---------.

My Dear Madam;

In dedicating to you the following pages, I afford to myself the highest satisfaction, because I turn with pleasure to the many valuable hours I have passed in your enlightening conversation. I shall not, by any ostentatious display of words, endeavour to extol my work, because I am well aware, that, in your opinion, L'homme le plus éclairé est ordinairement celui qui pense le plus modestement de lui-même.

The

The *numberless* inaccuracies which have escaped observation throughout these volumes, might well demand a *serious* excuse; but, I shall content myself, with merely pointing out *such* as appear, to *me*, most absurd—for the remainder, I must trust to the liberality of my readers.

You will perceive, that some of my ideas are partly borrowed from the works of others. The character of Julia, bears resemblance to the Laura of Petrarch, and Marmion's Constance. The story of Barbara, is a copy of Pope's Mother Needham.

"But pious Needham dropt the name of God."

Doubtless, there will be found in these pages errors, of which I myself, am ignorant, (being too familiar with the subject) and ideas, long flown, that even I may now deem inconsistent; this reminds me of an ancedote, related by Campbell, in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, vol 2. page 93. "It is reported" says he, "of Lopez "de Vega a famous Spanish Poet, that the Bi-
"shop

"shop of Beller, being in Spain, asked him to "explain one of his sonnets, which he said "he had often read, but never understood. "Lopez took up the Sonnet, and after reading "it over and over several times, frankly ac-"knowledged that he did not understand it "himself; a discovery which the poet probably "never made before."

I would not infer from this, that I do not understand my own writings, but offer it as an excuse for the apparent obscurities of *any* Author, being a striking instance that the mind is not at all times, equally master of its strongest conceptions, or powers of recollection, or imagination; this conviction might, with some propriety, teach the reader, by referring in like nature to himself, to avoid the illiberal habit of too rapid censure.

I shall offer no further arguments on this subject, but content myself with the hope that there may be found in this work, in spite of its defects, interest enough to merit not only your

your approbation, but that of the publick; for, since Plutarch and Cicero have avoided it, as their opinion, that the love of praise influences *all* mankind, it would appear like contemptible affectation in *me* to deny the pleasure I should receive, in the applauses of liberal minds.

E. B.

THE

BLACK ROBBER.

A ROMANCE.

"in Hassan's hall
"The lonely Spider's thin grey pall,
"Waves slowly widening o'er the wall;
"And in the fortress of his power
"The owl usurps the beacon tower."

LORD BYRON.

CHAP. I.

IN feudal times, and long, very long, ere England had attained that glorious emancipation which enabled the virtues of the vassal to appal, and bid defiance to the chieftain's vices—while the stormy, rude, and confused government of her princes served rather to aggravate than alleviate the woes of her humbler

subjects; uprose in all the majestic pomp of gothic and feudal splendour, the proud and lofty turrets of St. Julien, rendered impregnable to the attempts of human art, by the formidable additions of strength they had received from the profusive hands of a long line of princely masters, descending from remote and barbarous ages.

The Castle was of stone, originally grey, but now tottering with age and nearly shrouded in moss, ivy, and dampness, its appearance possessed much more of the terrific than the inviting; still an awful sublimity would steal across the gazer's soul, and a melancholy emotion for the falling grandeur of ancient times, as his eye rested on the towering battlements, which darting from thick writhes of ivy, guarded a donjon of unusual size and strength, considered in olden times as a place of the most secure

retreat

retreat at the moments of attack, and also as a last rendezvous of resistence for archery on the like occasion:—where no longer waved the red cross banner of St. Julien, there, unmolested by obtrusive hands, flourished in rugged sweetness the briony and the wall-flower. The prop to uphold them, the finger of Nature—the stream to refresh them, the tears of Heaven!

A wide and deep moat surrounded the fabric, overhung with an immense drawbridge, leading to the arched gates of the outer court,—secured in time of feud by a strong portcullis, which now appeared rusting on its wheels from neglect and the weight of years. Long deep woods of chesnut, oak and elm, shaded the building for many miles; gigantic hills that seemed battling with the clouds and half hid in the purple mist of distance, closed the beauteous scene, upon whose

fertile sides the peasants had reared their mossy cabins and, rendered by poverty secure from the attacks of Banditti, led thereon a life of peaceful serenity which monarchs might have envied. In addition to the picturesque charms of this romantic spot, on front of the castle, a verdant valley spread its ample bosom covered with wild flowers, moss and fragrance; wherein, more to heighten the bewitching enchantment, when the busy hum of domestic labour had ceased, as the sober rays of the setting sun fell slantingly from the azure windows of Omnipotence, the joyous rustic might be traced leading his happy partner through the mazy meanders of the unskilled dance, to the rudely sweet harmony of a woodland pipe, whose simple notes seemed on the distant traveller's ear like Fancy's magic whispers to the soul of poesy.

But alas! though Nature's profusive hand

hand had thus benificently scattered its most lovely charms round the antiquated mansion of St. Julien, which during the existence of its last Lord, echoed often with the reveller's laugh and the merry song; its present heir better loved to tarry in other lands, than return to his princely, venerable home, whose mournfully frowning grandeur seemed at once to reproach and regret his absence. Small was the number of inhabitants which now resided beneath this cloistered pile, for save the aged butler Gregory, a dumb boy called Philip, and the housekeeper Dame Claribel, few ever passed the outer walls; except rarely the wandering stranger at the instigation of curiosity, might be induced almost unwelcomely, to intrude on the gloomy solitude of Gregory, for the satisfaction of surveying the internal beauties of the building, or examining its gothic vestiges of Saxon greatness.

Three persons of more opposite natures than Gregory, Philip and Claribel, perhaps never resided together. The morose and sullen reserve of the butler was indeed a striking contrast both to the simplicity of the youth, and the seemingly presuming curiosity of the housekeeper, who inwardly and ardently burned for the possession of secrets relative to the family of her master, which she conceived Gregory possessed and which he alone eould communicate to her. This Clarible knew, that on the death of his brother, Baron St. Julien had commissioned Gregory with his attendant Philip, to superintend the trifling affairs at the Castle, and that she alone of all her late Lord's attendants, was permitted to retain a domestic station therein.

Many a night when the warring storms of winter howled fearfully round the beetling battlements, shaking with horrid

rid crashes the massy rafters of the Mansion, would Gregory sit unmindful of the mirth inspiring faggot which Philip had thrown athwart the dying embers, and silently listen to the pitiless blast; in those moments the suspicions of Claribel arose; for as the fire-light frequently gleamed on his sallow features, she conceived that the traces of anguish and compassion were visible thereon; once indeed when a deep sigh escaped his bosom, no longer able to endure her impatience, she tremblingly enquired the cause; "I sigh" said he, suddenly rising and flashing on her a look of stern and contemptuous scorn, "at the painful recollection of *past offences;*" and stalking to the door abruptly quitted the apartment.

Claribel gazed fearfully on his countenance as he disappeared, and the deep mystery imprinted thereon added materially to her disappointed impatience.

Need we be surprised at this woman's curiosity, when daily striking examples are afforded us of the same nature, tending in illiberal hands to the most dangerous and irretrievable ill; for alas! how frequently are the thoughts of innocence confided to exaggerating ministers, and circulated by the tongue of calumny, till the poor object unconsious of its offences, stands forth a piteous victim to *guiltless* shame.

It was not that Claribel felt any desire to betray the private affairs of a family in which she had existed from her earliest age till the snows of many years had fallen on her; no, in the bosom of that house she had passed a long drawn scene of tranquility, and custom had rendered each object pertaining thereto, both so dear and even necessary to her existence, that she hoped to close her eyes eternally beneath its walls: it was then, that

no longer receiving the usual confidence of her employer, Claribel conceived that mystery, as too frequently it does, implicated shame or guilt, and the faithful creature trembled for the sacred ashes of her Lord, and the honor of St. Julien's name, to which she had been accustomed to look with profound veneration; from its benificence she had ever received her daily bread, and its tower of virtuous strength, its fame and its glory, were objects dearer to her faithful heart, than the few remaining pleasures of her wintery age; for in those days the fidelity of servants was their boasted treasure, and the truth of the vassal the shield of the chief.

Objects of a weaker formation have both perplexed and confounded hearts more aspiring, and intellects more refined than those of Claribel, but few ever possessed better or nobler instigations for the cause of enquiry; many like her, who

where ignorant of the reason, deemed it truly mysterious, that an heir to such domains as those of St. Julien, came not to enjoy the possessions of his ancestors, but retired shrouded in silent distance, while neglect and gloom were suffered to hold a state of uninterrupted empire in his princely halls. As to the fears of Claribel, or the moroseness of of her companion, we shall leave them at present as minor objects in the scene, and at once proceed to satisfy our readers as to the motive for Gregory's *apparent* secrecy, or the cause which withheld St. Julien from the dwelling of his fathers.

Ulric St. Julien was the *second* Son of an Earl of that name, and from his infancy had been destined by his father for the cloister, it being the custom in those days for nobles to confer, with their titles, the principal property on the elder son;

by

by which means, however unjust and even cruel they may appear, it was deemed expedient to preserve the dignity of their house and ancestry, in the enrichment of their descending representatives. As I have before observed, those happier laws, and that liberty, which now fixes bounds even to the commands of fathers, had neither by her benign beams, dissolved the terrors of monkish mandates, nor the injustice of paternal tyranny.

Too young to feel any reluctance in shewing ready obedience to the commands of his father, the innocent and unsuspecting Ulric entered the monastry of St. Gabriel at the early age of eighteen years. Here let us for a moment pause, and reflect on the cruelty which thus could induce the heart of a parent, to sacrifice at the shrine of pride and ambition, his unoffending child, at a moment too when the passions lay dormant

mant in their bud, and the sense of free-existence had never been. Then, perhaps in following our hero through the chequered pages of his narrative, should we find the indignation of his soul bursting from the oppressive trammels, so rigidly imposed on the unfortunate by monastic superstition, even though that indignation border not on correct morality, we shall be led to deplore, rather than disdain, to pity, rather than condemn.

Though at first the youthful Ulric might seem truly blessed in the society of religious men, because the apparent goodness and motive of their actions, to a heart naturally pious, led him to look towards them with reverential awe as representatives of the Divinity, and beings in themselves of holy rather than human nature; yet alas! when the fire of novelty expired, and the still dull round of sameness left a vacancy in his breast

for

for reflection, then fell the iron hand of oppression heavy, and more heavily upon him, by becoming perceptible to his heart and increasing with his understanding, till the society which had before charmed him, became irksome to his mind, and the hallowed walls of his cloister were converted to a prison.

The father of Ulric, as though in the same hour he had banished him both from his heart and his home, rarely approached the grate of St. Gabriel, to bless or applaud the pious zeal of his son; at first this neglect fell deeply on the lacerated feelings of the youth; still, mingled with bitter tears of regret, daily did he offer up prayers for the peace and happiness of beings that to him had proved merciless: but by degrees, the genial and heartfelt offerings of his breast became less subservient to filial and brotherly affection, till at last

merely

merely breathed from an internal sense of duty, they totally ceased to exist: for at that age, when the mind like a drooping tendril, requires the aid of some friendly hand to upraise and direct its wanderings, Ulric, accustomed to solitude, and too familiar with religion to feel her genuine influence, formed within the limits of his own mind, a thousand bold and extravagant ideas, to eradicate which, efforts were required of a nature more tender than those of the sullen and coldhearted companions of his cloister.

Thus, led on by vain and false reasoning, without the power of discriminating virtue from the more glaring colourings of evil, that natural want of stability which Ulric possessed, became as it were fixed in his disposition, and frequently induced him, at one time to coincide with rash ideas and opinions,

which

which at another, his heart had disdained to approve or avow.

While his life was spent in penitence, prayer, and abstinence, how differently passed that of his brother Reginald; surrounded by the minions of greatness, and nursed in the lap of ease, little thought he on the solitary mourner in St. Gabriel's turrets, but wrapt in the profuse enjoyment of pleasure, the throb of compassion was an alien to his breast, the sense of affection a stranger therein: while his slothful limbs courted repose on a couch of silk and down, those of the miserable novice, were bent before some sacred image on the cold and uncouth pavement of his cell; to that cell would he frequently retire, not so much to ruminate on the divine promises of holy writ, or to fortify by Apostolic example, his aching heart with firmness, as to meditate and repine over the injustice of his own unhappy fate. "Alas!"

"Alas!" would he mentally exclaim, "what had I done, at that unsuspecting age, ere reason rendered me capable of deciding properly upon mine own actions, or reflecting on the barbarous wishes of others, to be drawn into a life of seclusion? why am I consigned to a living tomb, while the unfeeling Reginald revels in the sunshine of joy, prosperity, and ease, regardless of woes that wring the bosom of an unfortunate wretch, which his proud heart disdains to acknowledge by the endearing epithet of brother." Thus would he sadly ruminate, till the long-toned midnight bell, sounding its melancholy murmurs from the northern tower of the Monastery, disturbed his gloomy reveries, when dashing from his cheek the tear of bitter anguish, he reluctantly repaired to the chapel. Those sanctified objects which had once captivated his soul, no longer excited the smallest

admiration

admiration within him; his duty, from constant observance became a mere task, and he frequently affected to observe it, when his heart and mind were totally abstracted therefrom. The world to which he was an entire stranger, seemed to his futile imagination as some free and celestial paradise, wherein the wanderer's path is strewn with flowers and his hour of existence crowned with joy.

The death of his father which occurred before Ulric had attained his twenty third year, turned all these upbraidings into a deadly hatred for Reginald. That which paternal respect had stifled, now burst forth with tenfold ardour, and when his brother condescended to visit him at the convent, in order to impart the tidings of St. Julien's death, and last wishes for his future conduct and welfare, scarcely could he restrain the

warmth

warmth of his indignation at what he considered insulting mockery. Reginald, who from habit was totally insensible to the advantages he enjoyed, entertained no idea of his brother's wretchedness, but conceived at first that his chilling manner proceeded from grief at the loss of a parent, or was the result of a life devoted to religion and retirement; yet at parting, so pointed was the contempt or Ulric, that it could not fail to convict him, and quitting the cloister with the spirit of anger in his breast, he determined if possible, to forget the ties existing between them.

Truly opposite were the dispositions of the two brothers; Reginald considered nothing of so much importance as his own heart's gratification, and buried in the enjoyment thereof, it never once occurred to his mind that the duty of those in affluence is to

seek

seek for and assist such as are in adversity; none of the finer feelings inherited his breast, and, so far from alleviating in endeavouring to soften and share the misfortunes of others, he rarely knew a greater enjoyment than, by holding up in opposition to their cares, the greatness and comfort of his own prosperity—to render those griefs more conspicuous and more poignant.

Far different were the propensities of Ulric; nobly exalted in his sentiments, self, formed no part of his nature; the various wild emotions of his heart had never presumed in his present situation to unfold themselves, and during his earlier years, innocence, awe, and superstition had entirely subdued them. If Ulric was the first to receive kindness with the liveliest sensations of gratitude, so was he now to resent an injury with equal marks of indignation.

The

The same proud failing, which perhaps had induced his father to make him a Noviciate of the Convent of St. Gabriel, descended to the youthful bosom of Ulric; the imperceptible inheritance of which he had not the power to withstand, since alas! too many of the hereditary imperfections of nature cannot be taken or rejected at pleasure; yet, if on one side the haughty spirit of Ulric led him into the committal of errors, on the other, it exalted him above the level of criminal meanness, and had he been placed in the situation of Reginald at the death of St. Julien, he would have been the last to sit down contented with fate, till fully assured his brother was equally so; and that he could not render him more happy by the voluntary sacrifice of half, or even two thirds of his fortune.

It was neither jealousy, malice, nor envy,

envy, that he felt for Reginald; no, it was a deep sense of the injustice inflicted upon himself; he coveted neither riches, rank nor power; he only wished the hearts of others to be actuated towards him by such principles of benevolence and integrity, as were ever ready to awaken the softer feelings of his own breast and excite it to the noblest dispositions; but exiled from the influence of a paternal monitor, when the voice of experience should have fixed his principles, the most undirected passions furiously rent his soul, proceeding originally from trials almost too acute for the endurance of his exquisite sensibility; and to such a pitch had they wrought his feelings, that affected either by love, pity, anger or remorse, they were equally boundless.

Yet in spite of all this, Ulric possessed an hundred virtues where Reginald inherited none. There are undoubtedly those

those who imagine, because they commit no visible wrong towards their fellow creatures, they are comparatively amiable; but, though it cannot be classed under the denomination of *actual crime,* a life of inactive affluence is remote from goodness; surely, having it in our power to spare the lacerations of wretchedness, and not to do so, *is sin,* while the despicable excuse, that we were not accessary to those miseries our exertions might perhaps have alleviated, remains but a lamentable illustration of natural selfishness.

About twelve months after Earl St. Julien's death, Reginald received from her father, the unwilling hand of Lady Matilda Fitz Ormond; she was the unrivalled heiress to considerable property, and as lovely too both in person and mind, as imagination can fairly conceive; but though in obedience to the

commands

commands of a parent, Matilda outwardly resigned herself to Reginald, her hand and heart had long been surrendered to another much more deserving her affection, but who had vainly solicited of Lord Fitz Ormond the honor of his daughter's hand. The fact was, Sir Evlin de Granville though the son of a man of rank, was not possessed of property by any means equal to that of Reginald, who was enabled to settle on Matilda a sum far surpassing the total amount of Sir Evlin's fortune. It was in vain the unhappy lady solicited the veil of St. Gabriel, or even death, in preference to a union which her heart abhorred. She was threatened with the direst malediction that ever inhuman tyrant cast on offending child, if she refused compliance to an act which must eventually plunge her into misery, however it might exalt the fame, or strengthen the power of her house.

It was useless that she declared herself the clandestine bride of Evlin, with whom her vows were plighted, for finding solicitation to Lord Ormond of no avail, her lover had persuaded Matilda to give him her hand in secret. Not far from the turrets of Ormond lay a small Island inhabited by a few solitary Friars, who entirely devoted to God and shutting out mankind from their thoughts, had retired to a secluded and romantic hermitage, to weep—to watch—to pray. To these devotees had Evlin and Matilda privately repaired, and in their Sanctuary became united. When Fits Ormond learnt this from his daughter's lips, his rage kindling, he vowed that unless she obeyed his solemn injunction to conceal the transaction, not only her own life but Evlin's should be sacrificed to his resentment, and that his revenge should alone terminate with the total annihilation of the diabolical

diabolical monks who had dared to unite them. Terrified beyond measure, Matilda bathed in tears and rather dead than alive, tremblingly complied with the fatal and unnatural request, when she was sentenced to confinement, till the time of her marriage with Reginald should be at hand.

Tears and sighs were her only companions throughout the livelong day, for others were denied her. The lattice of the apartment in which she was prisoner, overlooked the immense forests of Ormond, wherein she had passed so many happy moments in the society of her beloved Evlin: on opening the wicket, at a distance from the earth too considerable for the escape of a human being, she glanced with tearful eyes across the bewitching landscape, which to any bosom but one like her's, filled with anguish, despair, and desperation,

had imparted the liveliest sensations of admiration towards that Being, whose hand attires the fields in verdure, and gives beauty to the charms of nature.

All around seemed hushed to rest; not a breath of air disturbed the foliage of even the spiral larch: beautifully majestic, the forest boughs twining their leafy arms together, formed a diversity of colours of the most bewitching loveliness;—the last rays of the setting sun falling upon a tinkling stream, which partially appearing (where the mantling trees admitted an opening) formed a fantastic and romantic feature in the scene, reminding its beholder of the tranquil and happy solitude of Druid, or Golden ages; as the mountain ash, the sweet briar, and the woodbine, uniting their fragrance to that of surrounding flowers! imparted a sensation of pure and exquisite delight; while the

honest

honest Woodman, with his hard-earned faggot on his shoulder, was returning fatigued but joyous to his humble cabin, to share that enviable content with the partner and children of his heart, which the great know not.

"O Evlin" sighed Matilda, "happy thrice happy, are the lowly born; no animosities of greatness disturb their tranquility, no clouds of ambition darken their summer skies; I would to heaven that our condition had been like their's, then had the blessings of love and rapture beamed upon our fond hearts, unenvied, unmolested; but alas! surrounded by greatness, we are denied every thing conducive to the establishment of our peace, for what avail wealth and rank, when they cannot procure us that happiness, the poorest of our vassals enjoy.

The noble-minded and empassioned Evlin, whose thoughts were ever devoted to his beautiful Matilda, little supposed she was so shortly to be forced into the arms of another. He cherished the fond hope in his heart, that Ormond would repent of his unnatural conduct towards his daughter, and that she might yet be presented to him by a parent's hand. How vain are the imaginations of man! too frequently forming visions of rapture, never, never to be realized: the fatal phantom at length shrinks from his infatuated gaze, either to attract him headlong from the destructive declivity, or leave him a prey to irremediable anguish.

A thousand fond hopes and wild conjectures floating across his mind, Evlin hastened to the bower wherein he was accustomed to meet the object dearest to his existence, but in vain did he await

her

her arrival; and in vain imagined the gentle murmurs of the gale, as they kissed the agitated foliage of the gossamer,to be the voice of her he loved: alas! she came not—swelling with emotion, his mind conjured up a host of agonizing scenes, in which he beheld his Matilda, dying, dead, and coldly extended on her bier—in such a frame of mind, he deliberated how to act; at length, taking one of the most solitary windings in the forest, he approached as near as possible to the castle: Matilda beheld him from the lattice, and her young heart beat quick with apprehensions for his saftey.

Opening the wicket, she anxiously motioned him to stay,—then writing a few words expressive of her unhappy situation, hastily enclosed them in an amulet of gold, and as well as her strength would permit, threw them towards the spot whereon he was standing,

and almost joyfully beheld him rush forward, as Ormond entered the apartment motioning her to follow him: tremblingly she complied, and was ushered into the hated presence of St. Julien, who waited in the hall, with one of the Friars of St. Gabriel's Monastery, to perform the nuptial ceremony. "My father," cried the frantic lady, throwing herself at his feet, "for mercy's sake do not violate your sacred authority, and force me into those arms from which my breaking heart recoils with horror. O my lord! by the sainted shade of that dear mother, whose tender accents first taught me to honour and to love you, I entreat, I implore your compassion."

"This moment, exclaimed" Ormond, sternly, "obdurate girl comply with my commands, in giving your hand to the Earl, or dread my severest malediction. Take her St. Julien, from a father's hand,

and

and may you be happy as your merits deserve, and you Matilda, learn obedience to this nobleman; for know that in thus consulting your happiness, I expect and hope, it is secured for ever."

St. Julien now grasped one of Matilda's hands, and Ormond the other, leading her almost forcibly towards the chapel, where the monk hurried over the marriage ceremony, while she in a state bordering on phrenzy, between hope and fear, united her feeble voice in obedience to the ambitious mandate of her rigidly unfeeling, and relentless father. Reginald said little, calculated to relieve the despair and agony of Matilda's mind; he felt satisfied that his purpose was accomplished, in thus easily attaining the hand of one, if ever he loved, the object of his affection. O! how void of feeling, how totally different was his nature to that of the gentle

Evlin! the contrast weighed heavily upon Matilda's bosom, while tears, shed at the retrospection of happier days, afforded her that sad and melancholy relief, with which the virtuously unhappy alone can sympathize.

At the conclusion of the service, the priest being dismissed, with a suitable compliment to his patron saint, horses were ordered, and a covered litter provided to convey the Bride to the mansion of St. Julien, which was thronged with guests in joyful expectation of her arrival.

Nothing particularly interesting, occurred during their journey; and so deeply wrapped in sorrowful reflection sat Matilda, that it was in vain her domestic drew aside the curtains of the litter, and endeavoured to excite her attention towards the fascinating prospects

pects that surrounded them. The evening sunbeams were hastily sinking behind the distant hills, and tinging with golden streaks the rosy clouds of heaven, when the mellow tinkling of a distant harp and the merry-sounding lute awoke her from a deep trance of gloomy thought, and raising her eyes, the lofty turrets of St. Julien broke partially through the many coloured foliage upon her view, as a groupe of jocund wassailers, appeared hastening through the valley, to congratulate and welcome them to the castle.

Each eye save Matilda's beamed with pleasure, each form but that which occasioned their festivity, seemed animated by joy; for a moment she gazed bewildered on their mirth, but instantly recollecting the fatal cause which inspired it, hastily withdrew her gaze, and inwardly reproached herself for the momentary forgetfulness of her sorrows.

Conducted to the banquet hall, she unconsciously seated herself between Ormond and St. Julien at the nuptial feast, beneath the weight of which the oppressed tables seemed to labour; all the choicest delicacies that the season or expence would allow, were displayed to tempt her lip, but in vain; nor could the voluptuous allurements of softly breathing strains, awake her from gloomy reflections, but served rather from their uncongeniality, to render her situation, if possible, more wretched. Thus inconsolable, her bosom filled with desperate thoughts, at the solemn hour of midnight, Matilda preceded by Claribel repaired to her chamber; for her own attendant, forgetful of the woes that wrung the heart of an indulgent mistress, had wandered to some distant part of the fabric, in conjunction with the thronging votaries of pleasure, which universally reigned around.

Unwilling

Unwilling to accept the services of a total stranger, Matilda speedily dismissed Claribel, and fervently offering up a solemn prayer to Heaven, from whose benign interference alone she might expect protection; a momentary dawn of hope sweetly beamed upon her cares, when rising from the devotional attitude into which she had fallen, she threw open the corridor to observe whither a chance of escape offered itself to her view

Attired in sickly majesty, rode high the waning moon, shedding her mystic beams across the silver sleeping surface of the moat; no sound, save the plaintive strain of the lovelorn Philomela, and the frequent burst of revelry which came floating on the breeze, ruffled the deathlike stillness of night. Matilda gazing anxiously around, perceived the draw-bridge down and unat-

tended; a flash of liberty gave light to the wild hopes that fluttered round her breast, and the joyful idea of escape was instantly formed. The ground was at so trifling a distance, that throwing her scarf over her shoulders, she readily succeeded in descending, and crossing the drawbridge unnoticed, plunged into the darkest intricacies of the woods.

CHAP.

CHAPT. II.

"E'en I at this sad sight beyond due bounds
Am carried, and the fountain of my tears
No longer can restrain."

"O Love resistless is thy might."

POTTER's SOPHOCLES.

DURING these singular events at the Castle of St. Julien, fate had not forgotten to wave her parti-coloured wings over the head of Ulric: he had heard the account of his brother's marriage, from the monk who attended; and from strangers visiting the convent, learnt the tidings of Matilda's flight. Too noble to exult at any thing in the shape of another's misfortunes, but still unable to forget the author of his own—

struggling

struggling between the conflict of commisseration and exultation, he prepared to join in the splendidly solemn festivities of his patron's day; in hononr of which a young and noble lady, at the instigation of friends, had consented to shroud her perishable charms in monastic gloom, and wear for ever the black and sacred veil of their favorite saint.

The infant beams of day had already fallen upon the lofty turrets of the monastery, and darting their cheering lustre through the narrow and stained windows, reflected a variety of colours on the rude pavement of the cloistered aisles, in the lofty galleries of which, a multitude of guests, from all parts of the surrounding country, had assembled by permission of the Abbot, to witness the celebration of St. Gabriel's day.

A procession of choristers now entered

tered the choir, singing hymns in honour of their guardian angel, in which came Ulric, wearing the habit of his order; his robe of purple being ornamented at the bosom with an *Agnus Dei* of silver needle work; and, as was the custom for young monks in those days, his locks were unshorn, hanging in natural ringlets upon his shoulders. The late emotions which had fluctuated through his mind, had given a pensive sweetness to features regularly handsome, and the manly proportion of his person, added to the imposing nobleness of his graceful demeanor, rendered him by far the most conspicuous and interesting figure in the train.

After these, on the opposite side, entered the Abbot and Abbess, attended by a procession of Nuns, and ten boys, bearing sacred reliques, (famous for the miracles they had effected) enclosed

in

in boxes of gold, silver and fragrant woods;—then came six others with banners of silk, on which were embroidered, in splendid colours, the several virtues of the Angel St Gabriel. Then followed twelve holy fathers, with pastoral crooks, and crosiers of gold, burning incense, from which clouds of purple smoak ascending to the ceiling, filled the convent with exquisite perfume.

This solemn procession having passed thrice round the church, the venerable Abbot took his station at the altar and raising his eyes, blessed and consecrated the veil, as, at the tinkling of a silver bell, the massy candles of wax surrounding a figure of St. Gabriel in rich apparal, became instantly illuminated, apparently by supernatural agency; at this, the choristers resuming their anthems to the mellow tones of a concealed organ, now raised the soul on

wings

wings of dulcet harmony to the footstool of Omnipotence, and now with melting tones subdued it to a state of sweetly pleasing sadness, while the folding doors of the centre aisle were thrown aside for the admission of a new pageant.

First entered two Nuns resembling ZEAL and FAITH; the former attired in robes of scarlet velvet— bearing in her hands a burning heart; the latter in blue silk, her head ornamented with wreathes of Heartsease and Passion flowers—her arms enfolding a crosier of ivory, round the top of which was entwined a crown of thorns: On the right and left of these sisters, several children, in fantastic habits, resembling the temptations of mankind, endeavoured to excite their attenton towards the assemblage of persons, or to the various festoons and pictures with which the monastery was decorated; but, with uplifted

uplifted eyes, their features remained placidly fixed, as though their minds had been totally unconscious of the admiring spectators: after these, accompanied by a long train of veiled nuns, came the lovely, innocent, and unsuspecting victim of persuation and superstition, Julia De Courci.

As the fair Novice prostrated herself before the altar, the eyes of Ulric were inadvertantly fixed upon her countenance, and such an effect had her singular beauty upon his bewildered soul, that he almost doubted the truth of his senses.

The blooming and serene features of Julia, appeared to him more captivating than any thing his imagination had ever yet suggested; and as she turned her blue eyes to heaven, a tear, shed perhaps at some tender recollection, trickling down her cheek, filled his breast

with

with such indescribable emotions as seemed to dissolve his heart.

"Ah" sighed Ulric, internally, "that I were some lone rustic, and this Angel of Light, my companion—what then were the wealth of empires, to bliss like mine? then Reginald, mightst thou revel in thy greatness unregarded: nor would I exchange one smile from the lips of this fair being, for all thine honours."

While the Abbot was preparing to spread the veil over Julia's face, anxiously for a moment, she gazed around, as if to to take a last farewell of that world from which she was going to seclude herself for ever. O fatal error! even then her wandering eyes met those of Ulric, whose emotions became visible in his blushes, which could not escape the observation of Julia; his form too, inspired her with sentiments that till

till then had been strangers to her heart; nor sooner had the dark veil concealed her beauty, than somthing like regret, fell suddenly on the form it enveloped.

Many eyes were wet with tears, that beheld her thus young, thus voluntarily becoming a sacrifice to monastic superstition: but the venomed sting of lasting regret, rankled alone in Julia's susceptible bosom, and in it deeply fixed its torturing dart.

The solemnities at an end, each retired to ruminate at leisure; strangers, some to admire, and *some* to *deplore* the *mistaken notions* of the devotees of the church: while others, alive only to the outward display of monkish ostentation, dwelt on no motive, but approved, applauded, and forgot.

One there was, who in the solitary

confines

confines of his dim cell, hung fondly over the occurrences of that day; and rapturously figured in his mind, a renewal of each particular circumstance—it scarcely need be added, this one was Ulric; who though the midnight bell had already proclaimed the silent hour of rest, was still seated upon his rugged couch, deeply lost in meditation, and heedless of repose. The innocent, the Sylph-like Julia was still uppermost in his imagination, and whichsover way he turned his eyes, her enchanting form yet seemed floating before him.

Alas! no hope imparted a ray of comfort to his soul; but all therein was cheerless as the desolate heath, when the pale moonlight withdraws to its tower of clouds, or the saphir-spangled morn, throws on her shadowy veil of pierceless mist.

Julia was devoted to St. Gabriel, and doomed never, under dread of perdition, to hearken to the vows of love: Ulric too was a priest of the most rigid order: yet a fatal something whispered to his heart, that though access to eternal happiness depended on forgetting her, still, still must he remember and be wretched:—though love were an obstacle that barred his way to life, yet must he woo the delusion and expire.

A new world, a new train of ideas rushed in upon Ulric; the convent had lost its gloom, it was become the casket which enshrined his most inestimable treasure—the citadel that contained his dearest object.

Day succeeded day, and his emotions hourly increased; the hardships of the cloister, his past wrongs, Reginald too was forgotten; nothing but the conflict

of

of love and despair agitated his breast; no companions save the sighs of hopelessness and the tears of regret, were cherished encroachers on his solitude; he nurtured a secret and consuming sorrow at his heart, which had fallen into tenderness, and he coveted retirement, wherein, unnoticed and unrebuked, he might indulge the delicious contagion.

For hours together would he hang over the name of Julia, which he had unconsciously sketched in his breviary, or lost in elysian dreams, form pictures of rapturous bliss, in which she and himself, were ever most prominent objects: no longer repining at the stern fate which doomed him to conventual seclusion, he almost blessed, and held the hand lenient that had placed him in it. He loved, at pilgrim-clad hour of twilight, to wander in covered walks of the monastery and listen to the simple notes

of

of the wood robin; or gaze earnestly on the bickering tapers of the nuns, while they passed to and fro in the galleries; and frequently imagining the lengthening shadow, as it flitted through the crocket work of the gothic windows, to resemble the figure of his Julia; fondly, anxiously, would he await its return; and, if it came not, sigh with poignant pangs of despair, as though the real object had thus seceded from his infatuated sight.

Whenever he attended the chapel, his eyes were anxiously turned towards the grate, behind which the Nuns genenerally knelt, in the hope of beholding the object of his regard; till at length, with the penetrating eyes of love, supposing that he distinguished her well remembered form, his heart throbbed wildly in joyful apprehension, and as he continued to gaze, he concei-

ved

conceived that Julia's attention too was rivetted on himself, and that her bosom seemed frequently rising with deeply agitating sighs.

"Ah!" thought Ulric, "can it be possible the least recollection of me exists in that gentle breast; to obtain a place in which, there is no enterprise however perilous that I would not encounter. Plunge me ye Spirits who preside over the ordeal of genuine affection, into depths of calamity, and let Julia's beauty be the bright star to direct and cheer my wanderings; then, however this burning heart may labour under the weight of its pilgrimage, it shall not repine at thy rigid discipline.

Thus the youthful mind of Ulric, ever ready in indulging the creative fancy of his imagination, gave way to hope, regardless of the almost certainty of

disappointment; since all sublunary enjoyment is but as the shadow, which comes before us and disappears for ever.

Since the chapel was become as it were his earthly paradise, Ulric's features no longer assumed the sadness of gloomy regret, but beamed with their wonted mildness and affability: so reformed too appeared his actions, that the earliest streak of dawn beamed ever on his public devotions. Such unusual zeal could not long escape observation from the most aged fathers, who warmly applauded his piety; and Ulric, the late repining Ulric, was now distinguished as an example and pattern of youthful sanctity. But although the daily sight of his adored Julia, might be a source of inexpressible satisfaction to his heart, yet was he anxious to approach, and in secret converse with her; but it seemed utterly impossible

ble such a design should ever be accomplished, since that part of the Monastery inhabited by the nuns, stood by no means accessible to the monks, and rarely was it known, that even the ancient Abbot, except in cases of extremity, presumed to enter it.

With no other prospect than that which eventually led to despair, Ulric racked his imagination to devise some stratagem by which he might effect the purpose nearest his heart. In addition to the delight the outward form of religion afforded him, (however painful the deception might be to his honourable feelings) by enabling him more frequently to gaze on Julia's form, partially seen through the dark foldings of the veil, and the strong heavy gratings which concealed her, it obtained him the approbation and confidence of the aged Friars, from whose

opinions his anxious mind looked forward to something like alleviation from his present suffering—and at an hour, when his heart should be crowned with love and rapture: such ideas alone led him to continue a deception, which in the pursuit of any other object, his soul would have revolted at.

CHAP.

CHAPT. II.

"they will weep,
That one so young, and what they're pleas'd to call
So beautiful, should die so soon—And tell
How painful disappointment's canker'd fang
Wither'd the rose upon my maiden cheek."
H. K. White.

"Who could refrain,
That had a heart to love, and in that heart
Courage, to make his love known?"
Shaks.

THE impression which Ulric's prepossessing appearance had left upon the mind of Julia, on St. Gabriel's day, was not easily to be eradicated; and though Love had aimed his dart with more gentleness at her spotless bosom, still the same soft contagion preyed incessantly within it. In her nightly visions did

did the figure of the young monk appear before her, and extending its hand, invite her to accompany it to scenes of peace and joy, remote, far remote from the seclusion of cloisters and the cheerless society of their melancholy tenants. At other times a solitary cabin, hanging on the mossy margin of a translucent lake, presented itself to her feverish imagination, wherein she seemed to share the pure and exquisite enjoyments of genuine affection in the society of Ulric; and as he tenderly imprinted the soft kiss of love upon her trembling hand, a thrill of rapture rushing violently to her agitated bosom, would awaken her from the dream of bliss—to to a bitter sense of her forlorn and deplorable situation.

The grate alone, through which she might gaze unsuspected, on the youthful form of Ulric as he assisted at the

ceremonies

ceremonies of the altar, was the only resort in which her soul seemed to find consolation Her religious companions witnessed with considerable surprise the sudden alteration which had taken place in her manner and countenance; but as Julia had not been obliged to accept the rigid vows of St. Gabriel, any otherwise than as the intreaties of her relation the Abbot, (who professed himself the friend of her father, and the guardian protector of her orphan state,) might be supposed to prevail over her inclinations, they attributed the pallid hue of her cheek to unusual confinement, and the sadness of her spirits to the remembrance of absent friends.

Yet, there was one, of a gentle, and kind nature, who conceived the cause to originate from a totally different source. Agnes Bertrand, possessing a feeling heart, and superior under-

standing had been necessitated to accept the veil, and devote her life to religion, under circumstances similar to those which consigned Ulric to a Monastery, in order to preserve the dignity and fortune of an elder brother.

Agnes, from the best, the most benevolent motives, had more narrowly attended to the change in Julia; she had been an unhappy witness to the repentance of many, who like her, led away by superstition, or unfortunate circumstances, had consigned themselves to a living tomb, or rather plunged their existence into misery, rendering life burthensome, and death enviable,—not from the trammels of mortality which the latter shook off, but, because it removed them from a state of incurable regret. Hearts congenial, seldom are long in becoming attached to each other, and, from the excellence of her disposition,

disposition, united to the tenderness of her nature, Julia was soon led to select Agnes from the rest of the sisters; both as her companion and friend.

"Why weep'st thou my poor child?" inquired Agnes tenderly, one evening as she sat near Julia in her cell. "Alas! sister," replied the fair mourner, "I may not—dare not say."

"I have a heart," continued Agnes, gently taking her hand," deserving I trust, not only your esteem, but your confidence; the gloomy dejection to which you seem a martyr, can but excite my interest,—fain would I learn, and share those misfortunes, which so evidently overwhelm you; my Julia cannot weep at the painful recollection of a single voluntary offence; is it then from any secret wrong she endures, or the loss of liberty that I behold her thus."

 "O neither!

"O neither! sister, neither; 'tis but a failing in human nature which I lament, 'tis a sorrow admitting no relief; and were I to make you acquainted with it, even you, my gentle Agnes, would shun the wretched Julia, and no longer feel for her that pity, you now so kindly express."

"Julia, you mistake, you know not the concern, which impels me, thus unwelcomely perhaps, to intrude upon your griefs: believe me, no inquisitive curiosity urges my enquiry, but genuine and heartfelt esteem; fain would I learn your secret, not to aggravate the sensitive feelings which are so forcibly wounded already, but rather by endea ing sympathy to re eve and comfort them."

Sobbing, Julia concealed her face upon the bosom of her friend, while unnumbered

numbered conflicting emotions deeply rent her own. She remembered with horror, that her whole existence was devoted to St. Gabriel, and that any thing like hope of emancipation from her anguish, was never, never to be expected. All before her seemed as one desolate and pierceless gloom; it was in vain she endeavoured to impress upon her own recollection, the nature and solemnity of vows under which she was bound; virtuous reason refused to counteract the violence of her love, and sighing, she exclaimed, "Ah! that I had beheld him one day sooner, or had never entered this fatal Monastery."

Almost thunderstruck at the dreadfully unexpected conviction of the word *him*! Agnes, crossing herself in terror, faultered "what meanest thou Julia?" "I know not' she answered convulsively, "why I am thus afflicted; joy has fled

this bosom since the fatal hour on which I beheld the young monk who officiated near the Altar on St. Gabriel's day."

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed Agnes, "how was he attired?"

"In purple and silver."

"Dost thou mean Ulric?—"

"I know not, but if Ulric be his name; 'twere better Julia had never seen him; was there a wizard influence in his eye, to dart this parching fever through my blood, and rob my bursting heart of all its peace, yes Agnes, yes, his image haunts me ever; sleeping or waking it stands before me,—in vain I fly from it, or from myself. A consuming passion triumphs over my happiness, from which alas! I perceive no prospect of escape but such as death alone can offer.

"Lost and unfortunate Girl!" sighed Agnes

Agnes, "summon up your fortitude, suffer not this weakness to overcome you, remember, your vows are plighted to a most High Being, whose awful frown might plunge you into eternal perdition; how small an effort, aided by reflection, may relieve you from the weight of your present anguish: but what, Julia, what atonement can save your immortal soul, from the dreadful punishment which awaits on perjured sinners." with such arguments as these, did the virtuous Nun endeavour to assuage the stormy feuds of love and despair, raging in the breast of that hapless victim, whose reply was only in her tears.

Meanwhile, Ulric totally unadvised, was not to be overcome by any reflection, however formidable it might seem in opposition to his love.

His passion still burnt with increasing

vigour

vigour, while the outward appearance of his piety, had so far succeeded to assist the visionary hopes which he entertained, as to procure him not only the notice of the Abbot, but also the privilege of occasionally passing the walls of his Convent, in order to attend on the sick peasant who were in the habit of daily sending to St. Gabriel's, both for advice and assistance.

No longer a captive, the turrets of his Monastery were become far from hateful, and frequently in his lone rambles, would he climb some lofty eminence, from which to contemplate the luxuriant sublimity of nature; while love, and liberty beaming upon his soul, taught it to expand towards the Supreme Deity, with emotions of gratitude and joy.

In one of these excursions, coming

to

to the cottage of a lone matron, he procured the necessary apparel for disguising himself as a poor village girl; when retreating to a solitary part of the forest adjoining the Monastery, he assumed the dress, and, after concealing his Monk's habit under the hollow of a fallen oak, repaired with a basket of wild flowers on his arm, to the Convent grate, where he anxiously enquired for Julia as a messenger from her mother; deceived by such a plausible artifice, the superior permitted her to attend, in the presence of Agnes and a lay sister.

His features being enveloped in a thick coarse veil, Ulric, so disguised, was far from exciting any suspicion. "Madam," said he, addressing himself to Julia, "having occasion to journey this way to the shrine of our Blessed Virgin, for the benefit of absolution, I ventured to the castle of your noble

Mother

Mother with a tender of my humble services, requesting to bear any communication to yourself respecting the welfare of the family; Lady de Courci, presenting me with a liberal donation for my father, a poor but honest woodcutter, on the estate, desired me not only to see you in her name, but on my return to bear a faithful statement both of your health and happiness."

The seeming artlessness of this address, won so readily upon the tender feelings of Julia, that had it been possible she would have thrown herself into the supposed Cottager's arms, at the idea of a messenger from her Mother—in whose loved society she had tasted nothing but joy;—the fatal contrast of her monastic solitude, flashed keenly upon her mind, and her trembling limbs almost refused their wonted support, as, sinking on the arm of the faithful

Agnes,

Agnes, she incoherently poured forth her thanks.

"Tell my mother," faultered she, "that I am well—am happy—"

"*Very happy?*" enquired Ulric with a voice of tenderness.

Too much agitated to form a reply, Julia, almost fainting, hastily drew the veil in deep folds across her features, in order to conceal tears which involuntarily gushed to her eyes. Agnes observing her distress, and alone conscious of the source from which it flowed, assured Ulric that it proceeded from the welcome intelligence of her family, which was the first Julia had received since her seclusion. At this instant the Convent bell proclaiming the hour of Mass, they prepared to withdraw, when the young Monk presenting his little basket to Julia, requested her to accept its contents, which were plucked from

her

her own native bowers;—as eagerly extending her hand, she received them through the grate, the Porter approaching from the interior of the Monastery, hastily closed the gates during the solemn hour of prayer.

Ulric scarcely able to contain the rapturous tumult of his joy, hurried back to the spot whereon he had disguised himself and hastily resuming his religious garb proceeded with alacrity to his devotional duties.

At night, he eagerly repaired to his cell, no longer to lament the sacred fetters which entwined him; no longer to burn with indignation at the unnatural conduct of his departed father, but fondly to linger on the beamy hopes of his love;—he had seen, he had conversed with the mistress of his affections, and the melody of her accents still echoed in his ear:

ear:—not sweeter sounds the pipe on the lake, at silver-crested Hecate's hour of stillness, than they sunk to the soul of Ulric; like some immortal he seemed to move on air, all transport, all anticipation; youth, health and hope, imparted vigour to his passion;—at once he reigned lord of a world of bliss, and giving loose to his bewildered ideas, flung himself upon his narrow pallet; but sleep no longer courted his eyelids, and as his feverish cheek pressed the same pillow which had so often been moistened with his tears, he blessed the witching spell that bound his youthful heart.

. . . .

Bright age of unsuspecting youth, not permanent, but ne'er to be forgotten; hail! when the imagination innocently vivid, soars beyond the contaminations of man, and the dark intercourse of his degenerating race—ere the virtuous throbbings of nature become corrupted by the

the glaring attractions of error, or borrow from the too successful machinations of others, a mistaken rule whereby to direct their own course: since alas! the brighter examples of those times are flown, when a SOCRATES, surrounded by his weeping friends, taught them the death of a Noble Man: when the Roman FATHER, unbiased by paternal feeling, adjudged his guilty Sons to dishonourable execution

Let us now return to the lovelorn Julia, who retiring to her cell, gazed tenderly on the drooping flowers which she conceived were plucked from the from the very banks whereon the impression of her own footsteps might still be visible;—whereon, in the sunshine of youth and peace, she had so often sat, queen of her gay companions, who in their frolic mood, twisted round her brows a diadem of hawthorn, neath

a canopy

a canopy of which they loved to crouch, and listen to the mellow warblings of the tuneful bird, or mark the variegated sunbeams as they fell upon the silver course of some half hidden stream. As these occurrences crowded to the mind of Julia, her sensations were those of the voluntary exile, who lured from the calm and domestic quiet of paternal home, by the delusive prospect of thornless bowers, adventures too far to recede, ere the zephyr-shaken roses betray their rancorous barbs, or the sweetness of fragrance becomes familiar to the sense.

"Ah!" exclaimed Julia, "sweet mementos of my deserted home, gaily ye bloomed amid your native vales, till the rude hand of the destroyer was upon ye; like me, thus severed from your woodland couch, full soon these fading buds shall droop for ever." While she thus continued sadly moralizing over the

presented her by Ulric, a paper which she had not before observed, fell from the basket to her feet; a burst of inquisitive joy, suddenly darted through her frame at the sight, she imagined it contained some tidings from her mother, which the peasent girl had neglected to give her; and cautiously breaking open the seal, she read as follows.

To Julia.

Fair and gentle lady, how shall I atone for this presumption, or plead the cause of a hopeless passion which daily consumes my peace? I will not—I may not solicit your esteem; I can only request compassion for an unfortunate youth, condemned (by the charms of her he must bless, even with his dying lips) to a life of despair. Yes beauteous Julia; Ulric, the monk Ulric, fondly, madly, adores you—and wilt thou not think of him—wilt thou not compassionate———

At

At these words a deathlike chillness hung on Julia's brow, and unable to finish the epistle she tremblingly sank on her couch; the conviction of Ulric's stratagem came at once to her mind, and bursting into tears, she lamented the terrible destiny which must ever prevent the consummation of their latent hopes, and union of their mutual loves.

"Unhappy am I" cried she, having inspired the breast of this young man with a passion congenial to mine own— was it not sufficient for me to be wretched?—Think of three Ulric; O yes! never, never can I forget thee, till memory cease to be—ah! how fatal was that moment to our peace, in which we first unfortunately beheld each other." Thus, plunged in care, lamented the desponding Julia; while her fond eyes averting to the drooping flowers of the young monk, they acted like a talisman upon her bewildered

wildered fancy, and hastily snatching them to her lips, she imprinted innumerable kisses on their tender leaves; Ulric had held them in his hand, and Ulric perhaps had plucked them from their vital stems: charmed with these ideas Julia carefully arranged their half withered blossoms in water, and as their opening tints slowly revived, bedewed them with her tears: her first thought on awaking from repose, or returning from mass, was to pick off the fading leaves, and sigh over the languid buds as they declined. "So," would she internally exclaim, "shall I also sink ere long, to rise no more, and that unlucky beauty which captivated Ulric's heart, will fade like thine."

A melancholy prevailed over her whole frame, and unable from excessive weakness to attend the church as usual, her heart became agonized with the thought

thought of Ulric's pangs in her absence. Agnes beheld the dreadful change with sensations of secret terror—as the Abbess frequently visited the religious cells, she feared least the unhappy girl, in an unguarded moment, should mention Ulric's name. About this period the widowed parent of Julia expired, and, as the holy mother imparted to her the heartrending intelligence, she uttered a shriek of woe and sank senseless on the earth.

The Abbess, like too many who without feeling, can offer consolation, while Agnes tenderly raised the luckless Julia, and hailed with gentle accents the reviving reason, reproachfully and in anger, held up to her desolate view the frailty of sublunary objects, and the weakness of their perishable charms; from the delineation of which she proceeded to the strength of holiness that

enables us to support with fortitude the trials of this world, and, prepares us for a better.

Julia bowed with reverence as the Abbess concluded, yet something like disdain glowed at her bosom; was it the voice of humanity or feeling she thus exerted to alleviate her sorrows? Ah no! shall the tongue of the Christian condemn the tears of filial affection? or that blessed BEING who became a voluntary instrument to save, look sternly on the cause which impels them?—Though the Abbess of St. Gabriel, gazed proudly down from her tower of monastic zeal, to the humble offices of her handmaid Agnes, yet the Great Master whom she outwardly professed to serve, delighted not less in the artless compassion of the unpresuming Nun, than the lofty ostentation of his more rigid votary: pause awhile ye

ironhearted

ironhearted Bigots whose eyes haply shall glance upon the unskilful pages of my tale: ye who know not how to appreciate the excellence of that Deity whom ye attire in frowns and vengeance, pause awhile with me, and reflect; *His* Son, disdained not to assuage the sinner's anguish, but humbly did he stretch forth his willing hand to aid him in his hour of peril—communed with him in his abject lowliness of heart, and attiring his own accents in the benign promises of hope and forgiveness, reared his wounded spirit to the mansions of Eternal Peace.

A sigh of anguish which escaped Julia, as the Abbess withdrew, spoke more than language could express to the compassionate sister, and clasping the afflicted mourner to her bosom she offered her the tenderest consolation—"alas!" articulated Julia, almost inco-

 herently

herently "teach me, amiable Agnes! rather to thank you for such unmerited goodness, than welcome to this heart the rays of human comfort; full soon shall the cold grave shroud my griefs for ever, and Heaven's sweet mercy snatch me from my woes."

CHAP.

CHAPT. IV.

"wouldst have me sink away
In pleasing dreams and lose myself in love?
His air, his voice, his looks and honest soul,
Speak all so movingly in his behalf,
I dare not trust myself to hear him talk."

ADDISON.

AS Julia's cheek still lay on the bosom of her benevolent friend, the letter of Ulric excited her attention, and in spite of the stormy pangs that tortured her breast, a deep blush of shame overspread her pallid features, which could not escape the attentive observation of Agnes, who taking up the writing, immediately presented it to her.

Confounded and agitated, "ah" cried the weeping sufferer, " my more than mother, how shall I plead forgiveness in having for a moment acted the part of a dissembler, and concealed from your knowledge a circumstance, which this fatal paper will at once unfold? read!" she tremblingly concluded, submitting its contents to the perusal of Agnes.

As the sister complied with the unhappy maid's desire, her visage became deadly pale, and her tears flowed copiously upon the manuscript, at length coming to the name of Ulric, "Mother of Heaven!" she piously ejaculated, "preserve them " then turning towards Julia who with downcast eyes fearfully awaited her descision, " my dear child," she continued, "it is now too late for this, you must endeavour to forget Ulric; I know full well the severity of the trial yet when you remember

that

that to permit a continuance of your passion, is to plunge him, yourself, and me perhaps, into eternal perdition ; the conviction will fortify your resolution, and at length subdue the wild emotions of your soul. O Julia! listen to the voice of friendship, and suffer not your inclinations so far to conquer your understanding, as to consume your peace in this world, and destroy your hopes of a better

"Yes! yes!" sobbed Julia, "I am resolved—I will overcome them;—bound by the most awful vows to St. Gabriel, to those vows will I remain stedfast: hence from my bosom all encroaching recollections of Ulric—come Agnes, let us pray together,—O teach me how to solicit firmness and forgiveness from that High Power, whom I have so much offended," then grasping the hand of Agnes, she gent-

ly drew her towards the crucifix, and, as prostrating themselves before it, their prayers ascended to heaven, their tears watered the flowers of Ulric, with which the Altar was decorated.

On arising from the attitude of devotion, "I will remove these remembrances of Ulric's love;" said Julia, "and yet, shall I act ungratefully? indeed I cannot—good sister, bear them hence."

"O Julia!" said Agnes with tender resentment, "is this the firmness you boasted?"

Julia instantly took down the flowers which she had twined into a wreath, and deposited them in her cabinet.

"Why have you acted thus?" enquired Agnes, with surprise.

"That they may be preserved," answered Julia, sighing, "nor fairer herbs shall grace my funeral shroud,

O my

O my friend! when you behold me, as you shortly will, extended on my bier, a cold and senseless corpse, be thine the hand to strew them in my coffin, as thine alone the eye to weep and gaze upon me. I see, mine Agnes, your pitying heart bleeds at my gloomyness, forgive me, and promise, faithfully promise, the last sad office that I ask of thee," she paused, there was something in her voice and manner which inspired Agnes with awe and scarcely knowing the import of her own words. "Yes," she exclaimed, I solemnly promise."

"Bless thee!" said Julia, assuming an appearance almost celestial, as putting forth her hand, she placed both the wreath and letter of Ulric, in the bosom of her friend. But alas! each succeeding day was far from bringing health to her faded cheek, true the rose's

 glow

glow beamed brightly there, but it was only the hectic colouring of consumption, since her hopeless love for Ulric, and regret at the death of her once indulgent Mother, preyed too deeply on on Julia's sensitive mind, to admit the alleviations of hope.—Frequently would she sit buried in deep thought, unheeding even the tender enquiries of Agnes, which were not only become unwelcome to her ear, but were too often disregarded.—Heavy sighs stole frequently from her bosom, yet the murmur of complaint was still—those eyes of azure of brightness which in health and peace, were seen swimming in delight, no longer retained their lustre, and Julia, the late sylph-like Julia, remained but a woe-worn semblance of her former self.

With heart-rending emotions of sorrow Agnes beheld the rapid decline of her friend, she saw her daily sinking in the

very

very blossom of existence to an untimely grave, from which no apparent means of preservation presented themselves: since alas! the root of her disorder was deeply planted in the mind. Agnes ardently loved Julia, and felt anxious by some effort, however dreadful in effect, to snatch her from the deathlike lethargy which enveloped her;—she was Porteress to a small iron door at the extremity of the Nun's cloister, leading to the centre aisle of the church, near the end of which, she was aware from observations, made through the gratings of the chapel, lay the cell of Ulric—to his retirement, Agnes inwardly resolved to repair at the silent hour of midnight; when no eye save her own, and *his*, who well knew the purity of her intention, should witness the transaction; it occurred to her mind, that by conducting the young monk into Julia's presence, she should be enabled to restore

the benumbed faculties of her soul to their wanted elasticity, by proving that nothing exceeds hope which is not utterly impossible—Julia, perhaps, animated by the pious example of him she loved, might be content to exist on the sublime expectation of a celestial and immortal union in that world of light, where no cloud of anguish dims the sky of rapture—no storm of discord blasts the bud of peace.

Consigned from her infancy to Conventual gloom, Agnes was totally ignorant of the danger likely to ensue from the perilous enterprise she was about to undertake; perfectly ignorant of men and manners, she was perhaps less capable of acting with discretion in the present instance, than even Julia herself: she imagined from reports which prevailed of Ulric's piety, that he was too holy to trespass on the limits of her

virtuous

virtuous intention, which proceeded no further, than the fond and anxious wish of restoring her friend to the blessings of life, had carried it; the crime, which appeared most predominent to her mind, was that of breaking through the sacred regulations of her convent; but this also deserted her recollection, while she gazed upon the pallid and altered features of Julia, although the violation of those holy decrees, Agnes knew, was *always* punished with *rigour*, and not unfrequently with *death*: Yet as her mind averted to the prophetic language of her visibly dying companion, at the moment of her melancholy request respecting the flowers of Ulric, and under the internal conviction, that Julia was the only earthly being for whom she had ever felt such disinterested esteem, or from whom she had ever experienced such professions of friendship, she determined to preserve her existence

existence, were it possible, even at the hazard of her own.

"Twas at the hour, when perjured spirits are said to quit their graves, and pierce with horrid yells the sepulchre—while coward-hearted guilt, afraid to fly, in maddening terror notes the distant echo; that a quivering flame gliding through the dreary cloisters of St. Gabriel, betrayed a pale figure, with slow and cautious step, pacing the gothic aisle; but, as the loud clock in harsh tones proclaimed the nocturnal hour, the form suddenly retired behind some sheltering columb of the pile, and half extinguishing the lamp it carried, waited in silent awe, to count the solemn tones: need it be added this nightly wanderer was Agnes, who with hurried footstep, had quitted her lowly chamber, in order to conduct Ulric to the feet of the unhappy Julia.

The youthful monk, unmindful of repose and lost in meditation, on his adored Julia, suddenly started from his seat, at the sound of a gentle hand beating against the door of his cell;—astonished at such an unusual circumstance, at such an hour too! he was willing to imagine that the perturbed state of his mind had conjured up the idea, or that it was merely the chill wind beating against the casement as it flitted past; regardless therefore of the event, he relapsed into his former position and reflections. Day after day had he as usual resorted to the Church, but Julia no longer appeared to gratify his anxious eye—innumerable and wild commotions fluctuated through his sad breast,—he invented a thousand stratagems, which were as readily abandoned. Dreading detection, he did not presume to enquire into the mysterious cause of her absence, nor could he again safely venture

venture to the Convent grate in his peasant's garb.—Thus musing, the knocking was again repeated, when suddenly rising and throwing open the door, what was his surprise to witness the entrance of Agnes, who as the faint beams of the lamp fell upon her form, attired in the white-flowing vestal robes of her order, seemed to his bewildered comprehension, like some supernatural visitant. "Ulric" exclaimed the Nun, in tremulous accents, "follow me, I come to guide you to her you love, since Julia's life demands the rash proceeding;—bear witness heaven that my design is holy."

"Fair Stranger!" interrupted Ulric, 'tell me of Julia,—tell me she still exists, that I may kneel and bless thee."

In language hurried and almost incoherent, Agnes imparted to him the particulars of Julia's situation, with the

fears

fears and hopes which alone could have impelled her in defiance of St. Gabriel's vows, to adopt a measure so hazardous to her liberty and peace. Charmed with the noble disposition of the adventurous sister, as overjoyed with his own good fortune, Ulric imprinted a kiss upon the trembling hand of Agnes, who crossing herself in alarm, prepared to conduct him to Julia; when for the first time, entering through the narrow iron door, which opened to the Nuns' department, he silently followed his guide, till she paused at the entrance of the cell, tenanted by the object of his tenderest love. Tottering with emotion, his heart beat tumultuously against his side, an unusual tremor prevailed over his limbs, while unable to support himself, he reclined against an opposite recess, and wiping the cold dew from his brow, gazed anxiously towards the door as Agnes entered.

By

By the glimmerings of the lamp, he could distinctly perceive the figure of a female in white raiment, her hands clasped, and her eyes bent steadfastly on the ground—it was Julia! his once beautiful Julia! a burst of anguish wrung the soul of Ulric, as he witnessed the alarming change which had occurred since he last beheld her, and inwardly did he accuse himself as the author of her calamities.

"How fares my Julia?" enquired the tender Agnes.

A deep sigh alone was the answer, but that sigh betrayed the desolation which woe had wrought upon the heart from whence it sprung.

"Perhaps," continued Agnes timidly "could you for a moment behold Ulric, to hear him speak—to compare your sorrows, and learn from his own lips the joyous hopes which he entertains of a bright

bright reward hereafter, for all those misfortunes which have divided your hands, but cemented your hearts, you you might yet be induced to smile on the pilgrimage of life."

Haply." sighed Julia" the voice of him I love, might yet impart a dawn of solace to my wounded soul; but why Agnes! why thus cruelly remind me of things impossible?"

"Not so!" exclaimed Ulric; suddenly darting forward and sinking passionately at her feet, "Ulric is already here, he lives or dies with you."

For a moment, like one lost to herself, Julia glanced wildly on Ulric, at length turning her enquiring eyes towards Agnes, who betrayed by the vivid blushes on her cheek the anxiety she endured, conviction suddenly flashed

upon

upon her mind, as proudly rising, she cried, "who art thou, that thus with unhallowed and polluting footstep, presumest to intrude on the sacred solitude of St. Gabriel's Vestals?"

"O Julia! behold me adoring at your feet, and take compassion on an unhappy being, whose love for thee has taught him to defy all danger."

"Rash youth! leave me, I conjure you leave me, fly for ever this perilous spot, your peace—your safety demands it; am not I a veiled Nun—were you not witness to my vows? those sacred vows which forbid me the intercourse of your sex—away! already methinks, I hear footsteps approaching, they come to drag thee to death, or worse than death, to some dark and dreary dungeon, wherein thou wilt have nothing left but the bitter relief of cursing that treacher-

ous

ous impulse which thus leads thee on to destruction."

Ulric raised his supplicating eyes, they were suffused with tears, and heavy sighs impeded the uttterence of his emotions. Julia perceiving the agitation under which he laboured, unable longer to support her usual dignity, sunk exhausted on the bosom of Agnes; while he, the pale image of despair, still on his knees, implored her to pity and forgive him, Agnes, deeply affected at the scene, shed abundance of tears, and snatching the veil from the angelic features of Julia, vainly endeavoured to recover her from the swoon into which she had suddenly fallen.

Almost frantic, Ulric caught her in his trembling arms, and wildly watching the lingring throbs of returning animation, hung fondly over the object which

which had infatuated his soul. "Ah Julia! Julia!" cried he "unclose again those azure-beaming eyes, let them in in mercy cast one parting gaze on me—on me, unhappy murderer of your peace!—say but you pity, you deplore my fate, though they drag me to eternal night, thy seraph form shall be my star of rapture;—thy latest words my joy of loneliness."

As some lone traveller from the mountain desert, transported, listens to the gurgling stream; so Ulric buried in the joy of woe, welcomed the tear on Julia's glowing cheek, and bade his thirsty heart drink deep of love.

"Awake me not, O Agnes!" sobbed the reviving sufferer, "awake me not from the quiet sleep of death, but rather, steeped in dull forgetfulness, leave me to slumber on; thou here Ulric!" continued

continued she extricating herself at the same instant from his arms." leave me I beseech thee."

"O Say that you pardon me—say that we shall meet again————"

"I cannot—I dare not!"

"Here then, on the cold earth, let me remain for ever."

"Must I too fall the victim of your rashness—is this the love of Ulric?"

I had forgotten" cried he starting from his abject posture. "Julia, I go—but, must it be for ever—will not some hand invisible unbar the envious bolts that hold thee from me! yes, sure the eye of that all searching Power, which darts below the thunder, sees and approves the purity of my passion—were it not his decree, could I love thus?"

"Presumptuous man!" answered Julia, "ought we not rather to solicit forgiveness

forgiveness for our impious offences, than arraign or interrogate the incomprehensible dispensations of providence? let us endeavour, if possible, from this moment to forget each other, or that we have ever loved—I did hope the secret of my shame might have been interred with me in the coffin—even as it is Ulric, my vows are inviolably devoted to St. Gabriel, and as his vassals would I live and die—had fate decreed our fortunes otherwise, I will not say this heart had been less grateful, I will not say Julia had then been stern—but, as it is—farewell—"

She waved her hand to the door as he was about to reply, the majesty of her manner over-awed him, as with a momentary pause of irressolution and melancholy, he abruptly quitted her presence. Agnes with silent footsteps followed him down the dark cloister

and

and closing the massy bolts returned sorrowfully musing to the cell.

Julia absorbed in prayer, bending before the crucifix, was for a time unconscious of the presence of Agnes; at length turning with disconsolate air towards the Nun, she exclaimed "Oh! how shall we answer this offence at the seat of High Confessional."

The idea fell to the soul of Agnes like some vivid night-flash which illumines and rends the silver surface of the deep; the evident crime which she had voluntarily committed, for the first time occurred forcibly to her mind, but the pang of remorse was a stranger in it—the best of motives had urged her to the deed, and though the punishment of the offended Ministers of the Church might descend heavily upon her, she almost conceived herself guiltless in the records of Heaven.

Interrupting her silence, Julia resumed, "I know Agnes the benevolent intention which excited you to the undertaking, and believe me, however otherwise I may seem, am grateful; but must not suffer the attainments of mine own inclinations to crush thee beneath them; true I love Ulric, yet am determined to forget him."

"You cannot—it is impossible."

Still Julia endeavoured to persuade herself that such a design might readily be effected, and founding her resolutions on the basis of religion and honour, while forgetting the slumbering consumer which had recently bowed her to the very brink of death, she falsely imagined, as the deceiver awoke not, her heart was become impregnable to the seductions of love.

The resolutions of Ulric wore a far different appearance from those of

Julia, though perhaps in the balance of reason they might have poised alike. In vain did he turn his eyes to that part of the Church in which the luckless maid generally appeared, she had entirely deserted the spot, "ah !" thought he, "she loves me not, how presumptuous was I to suppose it—another object more deserving, occupies her heart—maddening thought! O! that I had mine enemy on some cliff, which beetling bends athwart the stormy waters, that I might feast me on his perishing shriek, and bless the pitiless ghost that dragged him down."

From such jealous perturbations Ulric frequently resorted to reflections more tending to enflame his passion; and distracted at the long absence of Julia from the Chapel, determined to invent some new stratagem of beholding her—his peace depended on

the success of his love, and unmindful of circumstances, he felt disposed to rush boldly on destiny,—to die, or live. He remembered having observed suspended in the Dormitory, clusters of keys anciently belonging to various departments of the Monastery, and privately conveying part of them to his cell, anxiously awaited the hour of midnight, to try their effects on the iron door which opened to his earthly Paradise.

CHAP.

CHAPT. V.

"Tell me, I pray you, of some shadowy thing
Crossing the trav'ller on his path of fear."

" The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and providence their guide."
MILTON.

THE hour, which was to decide upon the hopes or fears of Ulric, at length arrived, when taking the keys from their concealment, with palpitating heart he repaired towards the iron door, which, after a variety of fruitless efforts, to the inexpressible delight of our midnight adventurer, slowly receded on its rusty

hinges; for a moment he paused to listen,—a dead stillness hung upon the night, and gliding forward, Ulric had nearly reached the cell of Julia, as a door suddenly flew open, and a Nun, bearing a lamp, appeared hastily approaching; trembling with apprehension, Ulric prepared to secrete himself, when the keys which he had concealed in his habit, fell to the pavement. Alarmed at such an unusual sound, the Sister fearfully raised her lamp, and observing his tall figure enveloped in dark-flowing robes, fainted: the young Monk tarried not to upraise her, but abruptly retreating, retired chagrined and disappointed, to his own solitary abode.

The Sister Agatha, who had fallen to the earth, was discovered in the same situation by two Nuns, who, alarmed at her cries, had hastily quitted their pallets, and gently raising the object of

their

their consternation, they conducted her to the nearest cell.

In a few moments all was confusion and terror, the Sisters unmindful of repose, flocked round the bewildered Agatha, in order to listen to her wild tales of the supposed Apparition, which she declared stood near the entrance of Julia's door, and which she firmly believed to be the perjured spirit of that lady's mother; some crossed themselves for dread, while others hastened to the Abbess with intelligence of the event, and on the ensuing day a solemn mass was chaunted to St. Gabriel, for repose of the wandring spectre, in which Ulric united his voice. Julia readily conjectured the supposed ghost to be Ulric, but how it was possible for him to gain admission, exceeded her comprehension, since the keys were still in the possession of Agnes.

At length she was almost willing to join in the general belief which prevailed through the Monastery, and after the hour of twilight, detained the Nuns captives to their Cells or led them forth in groups to follow their devotional callings.

Secretly exulting in the unexpected success of his stratagem, Ulric determined once again to venture towards the retirement of Julia, who had vainly essayed to banish him from her recollection, and although she endeavoured to conceal the weakness of her nature, her friend guessed too readily at the passing struggles of her unabated passion. At the accustomed hour, uninterrupted by a single obtrusive occurrence, Ulric knocked softly at Julia's door—in a few moments it was opened to him by Agnes, who subdued by the supplicating influence of his looks, had

no power to bid him depart; Julia pale and dejected, was languidly reclining on a couch—in an instant he sank on his knees before her, and tenderly enquiring into the delicate state of her health, perceived that her eyes were moist with tears,—she did not as formerly, command him to retire, but suffered him to press her trembling hand in his; she had combated with her better resolution, till the effort had almost ceased to be meritorious, since not only her own happiness, but that of others so apparently depended on it, and alas! might eitherways be crushed in her decision.

While Ulric yet held the hand of Julia to his lips, and silently mingled his tears with her's, at the painful remembrance of those laws, which sternly prohibited the encouragement of their mutual loves, under conviction of

eternal perdition; Agnes sympathizing in their distress, hung sadly over them. Surely sighed she, " it cannot be the intention of the Deity to debar his creatures from the society of each other—was it to avoid all intercourse with our race we were created!—to shroud ourselves in sullen gloom, like noisome weeds, tainting the caverned air—must Man the noblest effort of his Maker, an abject and unthankful being, fly from the charms of life, while animals, insensible to wretchedness, loved by their kind, range freely through the vallies! why is the cloistered pile alone deemed holy? who would not raise his heart upon the hill, and gazing on the lavish charms of nature, pour his full soul to that Omnipotent, who sheds from his golden urn the silver vesper-dew, and tints with invisible pencil, the webless texture of the rose! are we not told that "Heaven is Love"—if then

then Love be of so sacred an origin, what better can animate the human breast? He who formed us his favoured representatives, surely would delight, rather than murmur at our congeniality." as Agnes thus reasoned, (although her reasonings may appear rash and futile, they were the inmates of a benevolent and sensible mind, divested of that selfishness peculiar to man) she raised her swimming eyes to heaven and implored the blessings of providence on the heads of Ulric and Julia.

From this period, their nocturnal meetings became frequent; Julia rapidly conquered her indisposition, and Ulric already began to form schemes for their quitting the Convent. Agnes and Julia possessed many valuable trinkets, among which the latter had a rosary of diamonds; it was agreed when next Ulric journeyed to attend any of

the sick peasantry that he should convey this gem to a town not far distant, and dispose of it to a wealthy Jew residing therein, in order to supply them with the necessary means of existence, towards whatever part of the world fate might direct their wanderings. An opportunity of executing such a transaction shortly occurred, when carefully concealing the treasure, Ulric secretly entered to the habitation of Father Emanuel and offered it for sale. The old miser eyeing the crucifix with some degree of satisfaction, eagerly demanded the statement of its price, "That" replied Ulric, "must rest entirely upon your own decision, and when I inform you, one of our holy order to whom it belongs, intends to expend its value in charitable purposes for the honour of St. Gabriel, I feel aware you will not object to give me the total amount of its worth!" at these artless observations

vations a sarcastic smile gilded the aged features of Emanuel, and hastily putting aside the object of their discussion, he counted a hundred pieces of gold into Ulric's hand, as a return for the same. Unacquainted with the nature of money, the lover's eye beamed rapturously upon the sum, which he imagined almost inexhaustible; and hastening back to St. Gabriel's, with all the ardent and air-drawn promises of youthful fancy before him, he resorted as usual to Julia and Agnes, who welcomed his arrival and success with emotions of unfeigned delight, and the following midnight was appointed as the safest hour in which to effect their escape from the Monastery.

The happiest period perhaps of Ulric's life, at length lingeringly approached, and repairing tothe ir on door, he awaited not long ere the appearance

of

of his gentle companions at once satisfied his doubts and fears as to the fortitude of their resolutions. Agnes pale and agitated, no longer capable of affording support to Julia, hung tremblingly on her arm. In compliance to their earnest entreaties, and Julia's tears, she had consented to become a partner in the emigration, but as the moment of trial approached, felt herself little calculated to pursue the task she had so heroically undertaken. The finger of Ulric was on his lip, as leading them to his cell he threw open the narrow lattice which offered access to the gardens of the Cloister, and hastily gliding down the most retired walk, silently conducted them to a breach in the wall which admitted entrance to the surrounding forests.

In all her beauty rode the silvery moon, surrounded by her myriads of revolving

revolving spheres, reflecting their golden fires over the azure zones of Heaven. The calm of death was on the slumbering earth, save when the far-off chime of Convent bell awoke with sullen voice the lament of Echo. Long drawn shadows of the lofty pine crossing the pilgrim's path, and frequently bursting into rudely fantastic figures, startled his drowsy imagination, to the grey, misty, and half-formed phantasms of other worlds; and often did the fugitives of St. Gabriel pause alarmed to gaze upon the blasted Oak, which attired in its sheet of moonlight terror, seemed like some centinel to cross their pathway, and watch the fearful advances of their nocturnal flight.

As they attained a distant eminence, Agnes for the last time, stopped to cast a farewell gaze on the Convent's spires, which appeared faintly glimmering through

ing through the foliage. It was a home she was voluntarily deserting for ever, and though confinement had been her destiny in those walls, peace had been its companion. A thousand remembrances crowded to her mind, in which the recollection of tranquillity and independence, almost taught her to regret the step she had taken. So it is, when the hand of death, snatches for ever from our intercourse, that which we knew not how to prize, those errors, once the objects of our chief regret, sink with it to the tomb, while virtues, till then unperceived, fall with magnified lustre on our sight, and at length, in the glance of retrostection, we are led to deplore the loss of that happiness, which we had not the foresight to hold or to estimate.

Silently lost in thought, Agnes accompanied our lovers on their pilgrimage, and

and the merry lark, as he left his mossy cradle, to pipe a matin hymn on the topmost pinnacle of heaven, beheld them, many leagues from the monastery of St. Gabriel, occasionally staying at the Forrester's door to solicit refreshment or repose. At the eve of the third day, they came to a valley on the borders of an immense forest. The sides of this romantic glen were verged with lofty branches of the wide-spreading beach tree, imparting a brown and pensively sweet retirement, impervious to the parching noon-tide ray, or the pitiless pelting, of the northern, howling storm. A pellucid rivulet, meandering through beds of fragrant herbs, watered the vale—giving its dimpling cheek to the sighing gossamer, which like a second Narcissus, bent wooingly over its glassy surface, and falling from a lofty declivity through beds of broken rock, into a lake, poured forth a pleasing

sound

sound, congenial to the romantic solitude of a scene. so wild—so lovely, that it might well have been deemed the resort of sedge crowned Sisters, or the favourite solitude of some water Spirit.

Not far distant, an aspiring mountain reared its wood-clad summit, commanding an extensive prospect of the surrounding country; a few cottages irregularly scattered on its sides, whose white tops peeping through the green-wood, and pouring forth their little curling columns of smoke, excited the admiring breast to emotions of humble contentment and domestic tranquillity. To one of these cabins, our wanderers repaired and delighted with the genuine hospitality of the peasants, who endeavoured to outvie each other in artless attentions, Julia expressed a wish to remain among them for ever; she was charmed with the witcheries of the place

and

and the peaceful seclusion of the glen united with her ideas of of earthly happiness.

Ulric ever anxious to anticipate her desires, purchased a cottage which had more than the rest excited their admiration,from being placed upon the margin of the lake and over-canopied with lofty trees. The Woodman, their host readily undertook to purchase such articles for them, at a town some leagues distant, as should be considered either necessary for their use or amusement. In the extremity of the valley a melancholy Anchorite had built his lowly cell, at the altar of which, Julia in the presence of Agnes and the happy cottager's, who made a holiday on the occasion, surrendered her hand to the enrapturred Ulric.

Thus, serenely resting on the bosom

of

of peace, they resolved to pass the remainder of their lives in seclusion, and soliciting forgiveness for their offences, from One whose mercy had rendered them already so blessed. Ulric toiled in the garden and by his industry procured the means of support in a manner more luxuriant than the Convent had afforded; sometimes with his bow upon his arm, he pursued the wild fowl from her retreat of rushes, at others accompanied by Julia and Agnes, steered his rustic bark along the expansive lake.

Sometimes, when the sinking sunbeams were seen behind the mountain, would they also repair to the grey roots of a venerable Oak which drew upon its height—the heart of each was alike susceptible to the beauties of nature, and the loveliness of prospect from this eminence was of no common order; the

rich and particoloured foliage spreading its leafy vest, studded with the grey turrets of Convent and Castle, scarcely admitted the aching sight to pause upon the verdant meadows of waving grass, save when the red deer, starting from some secret lair, excited the eye to watch its sinuous trace, while stealing from the underwood to slake its burning thirst in the lake. Alone in the peaceful vale hung the little cabin inhabited by Ulric and his companions—around its sides were entwined the vine, the woodbine, and the rose; while the holy-oak, the sweet briar, and the piony, twisted into uniform groups, beautified the woodland terrace that surrounded it—over the mossy ascent to which, two wide-spreading chesnut trees, shaded a rural chair, that by its easy simplicity seemed to hold forth a hospitable invitation to the admiring stranger. "There is nothing so interesting as the

book of nature!" observed Julia, one evening as they sat enjoying the cool breeze on the mountain, "it is a volume that never satiates, for its charms are ever new! its imbellishments, in their rudest state, exceed the finest productions of art, since where, ah where! shall the most elevated attainment of man, effect any thing so perfect, but it must shrink in comparison with the lovely scenes around us."

Her eye beamed with transport as it encountered the smile of satisfaction on Ulric's features, who tenderly taking her hand, pressed it fondly to his lips, and yet he knew not how to repress a sigh, as a sense of his present happiness, and something of the future flitted through his breast. Julia was on the point of becoming a mother, and he knew not what might be the result of that awful period; without her what were the

charms

charms of nature, or of solitude? tis ever thus with man, no true happiness is to be terrestrial; that necessary something, probably assigned to prevent our affection from being too deeply fixed on earthly objects, pursues us to every spot and attacks us in every situation—tis a spur to prick the side of ambition, till it overleaps itself, and soars to some dizzy height of power, from which clearer prospects of more desirable acquirements are presented, and even these attained, it then unbinds the rankling wounds of conscience, leaving too frequently the deluded victim to repine at existence, and loath the joyless attainment of his once sanguine wishes.

This it is which animates, yet perplexes the lover's heart—which retrospection forgets, and the future cherishes—the rich it attends with imaginary ills more harassing to the mind than actual

adversity

adversity.—the lowly it haunts as it now did Ulric; nor were Julia and Agnes strangers to its baneful influence, since a painful remembrance of their broken vows, too frequently stole in upon the calm that surrounded them, to dash for a time the cup of human enjoyment from their lips.

It would be tedious to our readers, were we to dwell minutely upon each circumstance attending Ulric and Julia through two summers of uninterrupted harmony; during which, the latter presented her husband with a son, that we shall have occasion to mention hereafter, by the appellation of Valentine, the name assigned by Ulric, from the circumstance of his being born on St. Valentine's Eve.

For a length of time the health of Agnes had been visibly on the decline, and

and with heart-rending anguish did Ulric and Julia witness the decay of nature in their faithful friend. Agnes was too virtuous to despair of forgiveness, she beheld the Deity in his true colours, attired in smiles and pardon; well she knew that he who peruses each secret emotion of the soul, would acquit her of selfishness, the nurse of all vices, and cheered by the prayers and consolations of her friends, she despaired not of being received into the glorious presence of an all merciful Redeemer.

It was in the wintry month of December, that Julia sat watching by the side of Agnes, while Ulric was occupied in reading to her, that suddenly starting, the invalid listened attentively to the passing wind.

Julia surpised at her unusual earnestness, tenderly enquired if the storm affected her, as Ulric hastily averted his eyes

from the page he was attentively perusing.

"Heard ye nought ?" said Agnes "sure it was the cry of some benighted traveller!"

They all listened, but the breath of mortal complaint was lost in the hollow blast, (which howling fearfully through the glen, shivered with ruthless force the mournfully lamenting branches of the leafless chesnut,) and the arrowy, pelting hail, which pattering against the casement, bore dreadful testimony of the raging elements.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Julia" how bitterly the wind echoes through the forest.

"Tis a sharp night" continued Ulric, "the snow lies deeply drifted around, heaven grant no forlorn wanderer is exposed to the inclemency of the hour."

Agnes

Agnes shuddered, when through the long and awful pauses of the storm, a sudden cry of distress distinctly assailed their ears: Ulric instantly snatched a fire brand from the hearth and hastily throwing open the door, the prostrate figure of some person attired in a grey habit excited their attention; the impulse of humanity was ever sufficient to awaken Ulric's exertions, and carefully raising the benumbed stranger in his arms, he supported him into the cottage, where the feeble Agnes, scarcely able from excessive weakness to remove herself without the aid of Julia, insisted on resigning to him the chair in which she was sitting.

After some time, the animating influence of the fire and a small quantity of warm wine, succeeded in restoring the Pilgrim to a sense of his situation;—with a deep sigh, he enquired to whose hospitable attention it was he stood so much

indebted for preservation; "call it not hospitality my venerable guest "answered Ulric" but rather the duty which man to man owes: consider yourself with friends, who rejoice not more at your recovery, than at the happy opportunity, which enabled them to be the humble instruments in the hands of heaven to effect it."

"Thanks, thanks, thou worthy man!" cried the stranger, "that finger which directs the reins of the storm be over thee, and avert from thy head, for the sake of him whose life thou hast thus benevolently restored, the scath of adversity, and scatter profusely around it the blessings of peace." The big tear of gratitude was on his cheek as he spoke, while the sanctity of his features and the snowlike hue of his aged locks, inspired his beholders with admiration and reverence. "My good father" replied Ulric

kindly pressing his hand as he spoke "at once accept our thanks, and our welcome."

From this period the conversation became general, the stranger declared his name to be Bertram, and related many circumstances of the surrounding country which kept them from repose till a late hour: on the following morning he arose much refreshed, and after cheeerfully sharing their rustic meal, departed with many blessings,and a promise to renew his visit on returning from pilgrimage.

In the course of a very few weeks the state of Agnes became desperate, and requesting Julia to bring the infant Valentine to her pillow, she received him in her arms and earnestly besought the Almighty to bless and preserve him, while Julia, kneeling beside the couch, shed

of agonized affection, which she endeavoured to conceal.

"Why weepest thou my friend?" exclaimed the dying sister, "I hope it is not for me;—am I not about to depart for that place wherein all are blessed? for though human ideas of forgiveness will not associate with the guiltiness of vows broken, I feel that in my heart, which tells me I shall not be driven out to utter darkness, or deemed unworthy to approach the footstool of the most High."

Julia kissed the parched lips of Agnes, when striving to raise herself, the invalid, reaching forth her disengaged hand to Ulric, raised her pale blue eyes towards heaven "Father!" she sighed, let those whom I have rendered happy at the hazard of my own weal, plead for me!"—she paused, a death-like paleness overspread her cheek and her fixed sight seemed

seemed searching into other worlds; at length, faintly smiling, "I am thankful, she faultered, all future trials are spared me!" there was something so prophetic in her voice that it chilled the blood of Ulric, and he felt almost unable to endure his agitation. Agnes now pointed to an ebony casket in the apartment and motioned Julia to unclose it: in compliance with her request she readily obeyed, and found that it contained something carefully enveloped in an embroidered cover. "Take it" said Agnes faintly, "tis the letter which you first received from Ulric at the convent with the dead flowers, which I request may now adorn my shroud, as a testimony of the uncertainty of Human Nature." At these words her voice became suddenly mute although the scarce-visible motion of her lip denoted its inclination to devotion—so calm, so gentle, was the transition, that even Ulric perceived

 not,

not, till the hand which he held in his was cold, that Agnes, the late amiable Agnes, breathed no more.

Franticly, Julia threw herself across the body of her friend—what she had been to her, and each act of tenderness Agnes had bestowed, rushed poignantly to her recollection,—even Ulric vainly strove to assuage the acuteness of her grief, no persuasion could prevail on her to quit the corse, which she decorated with her own hands and watered with her tears, till the arrival of the cottagers who were to lay it in the earth; and even after its interment, would she resort day by day, to the grassy mound, and plant around it such flowers as Agnes best loved while in existence.

CHAP.

CHAPT. V.

"I cannot but remember such things were
That were most precious to me.—Did heaven look on,
And would not take their part? - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
Fell slaughter on their souls."

MACBETH.

Much as Ulric lamented over the grave of Agnes, he could not otherwise than regret that the health of his beloved Julia was daily injured by the gloomy sorrow which she suffered to prey upon

her mind, for the loss of her estimable friend; and as he was under the necessity of cultivating the garden (from which they derived their principal existence) chief part of of the day, he feared least a settled melancholy should prey upon her mind: he accordingly proposed their removal to some new situation, the scenes of which being foreign to their eye would less remind them of their recent loss. Julia started at the suggestion—she loved the spot which they already inhabited—it had been a Paradise to her, and she resolved to struggle with the weakness of her feelings rather than quit it. Therefore, when Ulric returned at evening, she flew as usual to welcome his arrival with smiles of joy; and although they frequently conversed together on the virtues and angelic qualities of Agnes, she fortified her heart to support it with unaffected composure.

The

The little Valentine became daily more dear and engaging to their affections, and the ejaculation, "how pleased poor Agnes would have been to behold him thus" frequently echoed from the lips of each. As the spring arrived, Ulric and Julia resumed their usual rambles;—they happened one evening to visit the turf which covered the cold remains of their friend, and observed that the flowers which Julia planted, had already assumed their raiment of many colours, when Valentine eagerly running up to the sod, plucked several of them from their stems, and bearing them triumphantly to his Father, cried out with childish glee, "yours"—Julia's features suddenly assumed a ghastly paleness, and with a deep sigh she remembered those which had been his, but were now buried in the coffin of Agnes. Ulric perceived that the internal wounds of Julia were beeding afresh at the emotions of her

mind, and tenderly pressing her hand gently withdrew her from the place.

Peace had once again assumed her reign in the Cabin, and the blooming scenes around it were fresh in their loveliness, when Ulric in pursuit of wild fowl, entered the forest, and urged on by unusual success wandered beyond the limits of his knowledge, till finding himself in a labyrinth, and totally unable to retrace his footsteps, he searched fruitlessly for some friendly habitation, the tenants of which probably might direct him. At length alarmed for the apprehensions of Julia, and perceiving no assistance at hand, he endeavoured to recollect the objects that he passed on his way, in hopes by such means to extricate himself.

The immense trees of the wilderness, which for ages had been weaving their hoary branches together, formed a sul-

len

sullen shade, impervious even to the mid-day sunbeam; in vain was it that Ulric by calling endeavoured to summon some one to his assistance, nought save the dying echo of his own voice answered him; no living being, except the wild deer rushing from his retreat at the unusual sound of human footstep, where, perhaps never mortal foot before had left impression, crossed his solitary way. At last, after wandering several hours, he arrived at the ruins of a venerable building, which, from their wild and unmolested appearance, seemed to have been by man deserted for many years. Ulric entered through a cloistered opening into a spacious court covered with nettles, brakes, and spear grass, towards which, as he approached, the green lizard, innocently terrific, darted for protection. For a moment, unmindful of his situation, the wanderer paused to gaze upon the awfully silent scene; here, fallen from its

late

late aspiring eminence, resting on its bed of natal security lay half hidden in weeds, the once massy and formidable battlements, although from its fearfully hanging projections, a part of the highly stained carve work, yet appeared to ornament certain curvings belonging to the inner arches of the lofty, narrow stone window frames, which from their exquisite execution and subject, denoted the fabric to have been inhabited by some wealthy and illustrious chief. In centre of the court or aisle, between two rows of broken columns, stood a lofty, blasted beech tree, at the foot of which, a quantity of presuming briars, seemed like little-minded and ungrateful usurpers, to mock the scathed form, which had so frequently averted from their feeble heads, the lightning's angry gleam, and arrowy sleet of winter.

Ascending a flight of narrow-winding

stairs,

stairs, Ulric entered a gothic apartment, still retaining traces of its former magnificence; the ceiling of which, being unbroken, still preserved the tattered tapestry, overhanging the surrounding walls—from which were suspended long tarnished gilt frames, once probably filled with portraits, but now, contained nothing, save the dank, decaying canvass, which had long since assumed a dark and sepulchral hue. A few fragments of ancient banners, hanging from the damp green cornices, and across an extensive corridor, which commanded a view of the surrounding woods, (ere the thick-weaving mistletoe and towering oak prevented observation,) proclaimed this place to have been some banquet gallery, or resort of enjoyment, in olden or feudal times.

While Ulric lost in contemplation, silently gazed around, a secret door suddenly

denly opened and a figure in complete armour, for a moment stood before him; but no sooner did it perceive the intrusion of a stranger, than hastily closing the pannel it disappeared. Somewhat surprised at such a mysterious occurrence, Ulric endeavoured to pursue the figure, or discover the means by which it had vanished but in vain; no outlet presented itself to his investigation, no aperture in the tapestry or wainscot afforded the smallest chance of detection—for a few moments he reasoned with himself, and was almost ready to doubt the reality of the appearance. He had heard frequent mention of the Banditti which infested the forest, and for aught he knew, this might be their rendezvous; but, was it possible for a human being to escape like a shadow, which some cloud, passing the sun, casts upon the earth? "can the grave" thought Ulric, "surrender up its charge, and the cold insensible

insensible corse, bursting its winding searments, assuming some elfish and fantastic habit, to bewilder and hurry on to madness the credulus fancy of human nature."

With these reflections he was preparing to withdraw, as several armed men rushed into the place, and covering his features with a thick mantle, in defiance of every exertion forcibly led him from the apartment. Fear was a stranger to Ulric's bosom, and unconscious of having offended, he earnestly solicited them to unhand him, as their mistaken victim; but no answer being returned, he became silent, and submitted with fortitude to the wayward, uncertain transactions of destiny. At length, after apparently descending into the bowels of the earth, the covering was removed from his eyes, when how great was his astonishment on discovering himself in

a spacious

a spacious cavern, from the vaulted roof of which, a cresset suspended in an iron chain, afforded sufficient lustre, to cast additional horror round a band of armed and savage looking men, arranged at a rude table, covered with cups and flasks bespeaking the half finished repast.

Ulric started, never had he witnessed such an assemblage of terrific features, as those of the Banditti—the ruthless smile of Fiendlike satisfacton was upon them, and the vulgar mirth of heartless independence echoed from their unhallowed lips: at a sign however from one, who by his superior manners appeared to be their Chief, their revelry gradually hushed to a dead silence; as sternly addressing himself to Ulric, he demanded the purport of his intrusion among the ruins

Ulric

Ulric hesitated not to inform him that having lost his path in the forest, he had been induced to enter them, in hopes some one, if they were inhabited, would be hospitable enough to direct his wandering course.

"What art thou?" enquired the Chief, eying Ulric's raiment, which appeared something above the common costume of the country.

"A Peasant residing in the valley of the lake."

"Art thou so great, so happy in poverty, that thou wouldst not exchange it for the society of men, who though classed under the denomination of Banditti, exult in the empire which they hold over the milder, monk taught part of creation? but probably our appellation may prove offensive to thine ear, with which no doubt the report of our practices is familiar."

"The

"The appellation of that," answered Ulric, proudly, "which is opposite to the principles of honour and benevolence, must be ever hurtful to the feelings of integrity, and yet, from the conviction of peculiar circumstances, I know not why the heart of a Robber may not be as correct in its nature, as that of a Monk, since the masked Assassin strikes with more certainty, and perhaps with less warrantable impulse—the one probably from some mistaken, or unlucky motive, falls into error—the other, too often, under the cloak of virtue and philanthropy, eventually destroys its unguarded victim, yet outwardly laments its fall with tears of seeming anguish."

However his dislike to Monastic men and manners, might have led Ulric thus forcibly to state his aversion towards them, in the present instance, a recollection of the agonizing state of suspense, under

which he knew his Julia would labour till his return, induced him more warmly to coincide with the sentiment and situation of the Bandit, in order to effect his own desired liberation.

"Then stranger," continued the Robber softening his voice, "you will not disdain our calling with contempt like some of your neighbours."

"I am ignorant of the opinions of such, as consider themselves my neighbours,—I well knew my poverty was a sufficient barrier to your intrusions, and a share in the little pittance I possessed, would never have been with-held from the needy traveller, who came to solicit aid at my cabin door."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the Bandit, "come, dwell with us."

"Not for myself I decline your offer, but

but for one to whom I am dearer than existence; I was the instrument to take her from a higher station, and towards me alone can she look for support and protection: suffer me therefore to depart; I am willing by any oath you may select, to bind myself to inviolable secrecy."

There was something imposingly noble in the look of Ulric as he spoke, which awed the Bandit; it was the triumph of a sensible and virtuous mind, over the rude and uncultivated nature of human barbarism. "Be this our pledge" cried the Robber Chief, at the same time filling high a goblet of wine, and presenting it graciously to his captive,—"our oath alone, the Bandit's hospitality!" At these words, Ulric cheerfully partook of the beverage, and after a friendly salutation from his rugged host, was again enveloped in the mantle, and conducted

conducted to the foot of the blasted beech tree—from which, being liberated. one of the Banditti directed him through many secret turnings of the underwood, to his way homewards.

Ulric tarried not on the road, his heart was with Julia, but the sun had sunk behind the distant hills, and the grey veil of twilight, hung over the glen as he entered it; the sweet pictures of his imagination, presented in new and vivid colours, the charms of that domestic home to which he was returning—his tranquil hearth—his Julia too, fondly listening to the incidents which had so long detained him from her, or offering the glowing cheek of the little Valentine to his lips, ere she bore him on her bosom to repose; since their union, he had never been absent for such a length of time. Now, entering from the forest way into the little shrub-

bery

bery which Agnes had planted, with lightly palpitating heart he approached the cottage, but O God! what words, what language can describe his emotions, on perceiving that where of late that cottage had hung, a model of rural peace and joy, now, a rude heap of reeking ashes alone covered the sacred spot; several weeping peasants were standing round the ruin, one bearing the unconcious Valentine in her arms who with infantine glee ,was watching the curling smoke as it ascended and topped the forest boughs. At sight of Ulric a burst of anguish escaped the hearts of the sad gazers, and, as with the quickness of apprehension he enquired for Julia, a death-like stillness prevailed.

The shock of worlds was on his writhing soul, and in all the phrenzy of madness and despair, Ulric beat his agonized

agonized breast, and throwing himself on the earth, in the bitterness of his grief, wept aloud. Vainly did the sympathizing peasants endeavour to offer him consolation,—he was deaf to their pity—the torpor of calamity had frozen up the intellectual faculties of his frame—no murmur escaped his parched tongue, no tear bedewed his pale, yet feverish cheek, as horribly calm he gazed, with maniac smile, upon their countenances—yet ever and anon, the sigh,—the nameless echo of internal desolation, burst tremulously from his lips; but it passed suddenly away, like the thunder's breezy harbinger among the reeds of the lake.

It may be now necessary to acqaint my readers with the unfortunate circumstances which led to the destruction of Ulric's habitation. Bertram, the pilgrim whom they had so recently en-

tertained and preserved from the inclemency of the season, on his return home, falling sick at the Convent of St. Gabriel, after tarrying some time in the Cloister, related to Anselmo, one of the Monks, an account of the benevolent treatment he had experienced from Ulric, Julia, and Agnes. The Father started at the intelligence, an explanation ensued, and the undesigning Pilgrim betrayed, but too plainly, the retreat of the unfortunate Fugitives: the words of their sick guest were speedily communicated to the Superiors of the Convent, who incensed at the indignity which had been put upon their holy order psesumptuously, in the mockery of religeon, called heaven to witness their revenge.

In an instant the bloody ministers of the unrefined Church were in motion—they tarried not for the morrow's golden

sun to light them on their way, but rapidly, invested with due human sanction, proceeded towards the valley, to destroy, like the creatures of Lucifer's ablest machinations, that peace which they could not impart, and knew not how to enjoy. Even the dark clouds, lowering upon the world, seemed to weep the mistaken atrocity of conventual rigour; and the hollow whispering gale, as it swept between the awful calm of heaven and earth, like the stern threatenings of some angry spirit, appeared in prophetic murmur, to denounce its extermination.

Julia, anxiously turning her hourglass, and lingering at the cottage lattice to watch the return of her Ulric, beheld them as they approached; the garb of St. Gabriel's Monks, familiar to her eye, conveyed instantly the dreadful purport of their mission; and uttering a

piercing, scream she endeavoured to elude their vengeance by rushing into the forest, but in vain; Anselmo, with the haughty triumph of a demon caught her in his arms and reproached her with the perfidy of a faithless nun; alarmed by her cries, the rustics left their cabins, but their courage being unequal to the maledictions which the Friars poured upon any efforts that might be made to effect the ransom of their hapless offender, silently sad they gazed upon each other, nor dared to offer resistance, while the merciless fangs of the deluded vassals of Rome, fired the lovely dwelling of Ulric—which they denominated in their ire the mansion of perdition.

Almost lifeless, the wretched Julia casting her eyes towards the burning cabin, and calling on the name of her husband, besought him to save their

child

child; when a peasant, more resolute than the rest, suddenly rushed into the flames, and snatching Valentine from his couch, bore him in triumph to a boat on the lake and hastily effected his escape: at this sight, a ray of joy illuminated the features of Julia, and while the pallid hue of resignation settled upon them, she abandoned herself to fate, and entering the litter, which was once again to convey her to the Monastery, silently and in tears she solicited the protection and forgiveness of offended heaven.

While the procession yet continued to approach St. Gabriel's, the sullen tolling of the turret bell, rung a horrible prelude of suffering on the ear of its existing victim; till pausing at the grate, (that grate, through which her disguised Ulric had first adventured to present a testimony of his love) the

Abbess, attended by a procession of Nuns in deep mourning, came forth to greet the arrival of the monks and conduct to confinement their devoted charge.

As Julia descended, the sacred Mother sternly and indignantly gazed upon her—but the proud and silent repulse of the fugitive, confounded while it damped the emotions of triumph. Each eye was again directed to the litter, Julia observed the eager glance of enquiry, and a thrill of exquisite gratitude rushed through her frame,as clasping her hands together,"thank Heaven!" she fervently exclaimed, " Agnes has escaped your ironhearted vengeance, and I, alone the cause, alone am left to suffer." She was now conducted to the cell formerly shared with Agnes, the door of which being suddenly closed upon her, and the key delivered to

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the Abbot, the tenants of the Cloister retired towards their respective departments, to bless the power which withheld them from vice like Julia's, but too few to weep at the severe punishment which awaited it.

On being left to herself the mourner cast her dim eyes around; not a vestage of what the cell once was, remained: the crucifix, rent from its socket, no longer reminded the sinner of a blessed redemption, while the lurid glimmer of a blue-burning lamp, placed in a corner niche of the apartment, served only to render the darkness more awful, and yet betray, half hidden in gloom, the form of something, at the remotest extremity of the cell, covered with black drapery. Julia shuddering, recoiled from the sight before her; was it some concealed assassin, whose secret knife came prepared to rid her of de-

spair and bedew the scene of her earliest guilt with atoning blood? no sound, no movement answering to her fears, in the phrenzy of desperation, she suddenly grasped the lamp, and rushing forward, gazed in speechless anguish on the fatal object; but an icy chill rushed to her burning temples, as raising the sable folding, she discovered it to be a funeral pall thrown across a coffin—the lid of which contained her own name.

This refinement upon cruelty even excelled her dread;—the afflicted sufferer knew too well, by the law of St. Gabriel, the forfeit of her offence could only be paid by *Death*; but the uncertainty of the tortures which might be inflicted upon her while living, was even more insupportable than such a thought; and, sinking on the rude pavement, she fervently lifted up her heart to the Most High, earnestly soliciting fortitude

to



to encounter the few remaining trials of life;—she implored pardon for Ulric, Agnes, and herself, not omitting even those, who wrongly imagined that by offering her as a sacrifice to their vengeance, they performed a most acceptable sight in the presence of Omnipotence—she prepared to meet death with resignation since it was the will of Heaven. True, the painful remembrance of her child, lost so early to the fond endearments of a mother, and Ulric's regret fell heavily upon her breaking heart; but hope, sweetly whispered they should meet again, in a world of celestial joy, and the assuasive conviction subdued to tranqil sadness her deeply wounded spirit.

At the close of the second day of her captivity, Anselmo, commissioned by the Abbot, entered and exhorted her to confession. "No, Father," exclaimed

 Julia

Julia, "the narrative of my wrongs, my woes, my love, must needs with me expire; return then, Anselmo, to thy employer and inform him, that Julia, the fallen, despised Julia, fears not the approach of death, but rather welcomes it as a friend, whose pitying hand, comes to release her from the ruthless weight of his remorseless hate—tell him too, Anselmo, however he may inflict punishment on my mortal frame, my soul will tower high, even into the presence of a merciful and righteous Judge, from whom nothing can be concealed, and to whom alone, will Julia render up the secret workings of her bosom."

Anselmo haughtily represented to her the enormity of the crime she had committed, and the eternal state of perdition which awaited on perjured Nuns.

"Leave me, mistaken man," firmly continued

continued Julia, Death has no terrors for the unfortunate :—that which I now endure, is Perdition."

Finding exertions therefore of no avail, and that she listened in silent indifference to his threats, the Monk, abruptly retiring, hastily closed the massy-bolted door and left her in total darkness.

CHAP.

CHAP VI.

To act with piety denotes a soul
Touch'd with religious awe: but the high power
Of those invested with the sovereign rule
May never be transgress'd."

SOPHOCLES.

" Mors cuncta mortalium mala dissolvit."

Not long after the Monk's departure, Julia threw herself upon the earth, for better resting place was denied her; a serene sensation gradually steeped her wandering senses in oblivion, and already did she appear sinking in the arms of death, as the angelic form of Agnes suddenly rose to her imagination, attired in shining robes, wearing

wearing on its brow a wreath of never-fading wild flowers, resembling those, in their beauty, buried in the coffin at the valley. The shadow reached forth its hand to Julia, and with a celestial smile welcomed her to repose, as they seemed, on the melting tones of seraphic harmony, to rise together towards the chambers of the east and the mansion of salvation: in that sphere where the sun is ever bright, and the objects for which it glows, perpetually blessed.

On awakeing from this dream, the spirits and hopes of Julia were revived; yet, for want of nourishment, her feeble frame was nearly exhausted: she prayed unceasingly throughout the day, and was still on her knees, as the hollow death-bell of the Convent smote upon her ear; she knew it denoted the hour of execution to be at hand, but it was also a harbinger of joyous emancipa-

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tion. No fear, no anguish, preyed upon her mind, but all therein was calm as the sleeping moonlight on the bosom of nature, when the door of her cell was again thrown open, and Anselmo, bearing a torch, hastily commanded her to rise and follow him. Unhesitatingly she obeyed, as well as the weak state of her health would permit, and approaching the cloister, observed the Abbot, and Abbess, with four Nuns closely veiled, in mourning weeds, waiting to receive her, at the small iron door, through which her escape from the Monastery had been effected.

It was at that still hour, when Virtue sinks unconsciously on her couch of peace, and guilt triumphing in the unmolested solitude of its empire, like some fell demon of darkness, steals secretly forth to whet the blunted knife of midnight murder, and steep its purple hands

in

in human gore. The Convent gates were closed, no stranger, as on a former occasion, was admitted to behold the sable procession which now attended the disgraced Julia through the cloisters of St. Gabriel, rendered more dismal in their darkness by the red glare of torches that the monks carried in their hands: and which the chill night blast, as it reproachfully whistled through the long galleries of the aisle, frequently extinguished.

Slowly moving in the train, came Julia—her auburn locks unbound and hanging wildly; her blue eyes cast towards heaven. Four Friars attended, supporting the coffin, evidently designed to enclose the unhappy Nun's cold remains for ever; but at the same time, to shut out from her breast the bitter sufferings of human nature. Pausing at the foot of a portrait, resembling St.

Gabriel

Gabriel, which ornamented the pedestal of the Altar, Anselmo, drawing a key, from the folds of his garments, applied it to the painting, which instantly sinking with a loud crash, discovered through a broard gothic arch, a descent of green, damp stone stairs. Julia's resolution died within her at the sight and falling prostrate before the Abbot, she incoherently faultered—"mercy."

But the bigot heart to which she appealed was calloused in unforgiving zeal. "Hold" interrupted Anselmo, rudely grasping her arm, "It is now too late for compassion." the crimson hue of scorn overspread the features of Julia, as he addressed her, and proudly rising from the earth, "is it then" said she, "ever too late, stern Monk, to alleviate the pang of misfortune? lead on, the shame of mine own weakness overcomes me."

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The procession now descended, and Julia perceived, with latent horror, that they were conducting her through the vaults of the dead. Many stones, half hidden in the earth, denoted where bodies had been deposited, for many, many generations; and the cold moisture, dripping from the arched ceiling, of the cavern, returned a melancholy sound to the dying echo of their fearful footsteps. Another pause ensued, as entering a more spacious part of the dungeon, the Monks, arranging themselves on each side, made way for the Abbot and Abbess to seat themselves at a rude stone table—at the extremity of which was deposited the coffin of Julia.

"Julia de Courci!" exclaimed the Abbot, in a hollow tone of voice, "tremble for the violation of your vows, and take unto your soul despair, both in this world, and in the world hereafter. Well

we know how frail and perishable is the human frame, but the spirit of holiness never dies—all pious consolation however, unhappy woman, is denied thee, since, in defiance of all laws, both human and divine, thou, with the base destroyers of thy faith, didst break, in unhallowed daring, the sacred tye that united thee to immortality.

The tall figure of the Nun, appeared somthing more than human, as with her eyes stedfastly bent on vacancy, she moved not, replied not to the accusation.

"Julia! false and perjured sinner," cried the Abbess, "repent; and by a faithful confession of thy enormous guilt, atone in some measure for its committal."

Suddenly recovering her wandering senses at the voice, and gazing

with an air of distraction on her condemners, "I know to well," she replied, "at whom your anger glances, Agnes, my best, and dearest sister—but she, by blessed providence, is exalted above thy little malice. Pardon me ye invisible Powers who reign over the destinies of mankind, that I lamented her loss; I praise, I adore thine infinite wisdom, and for the sake of her redemption, am content to suffer. Hear this, ye bloody executioners of the Church—this is the confession of Julia. Ye cannot rend from my heart's core the treasured image of Ulric, which I still proudly cherish there—ye cannot, with all your tortures, teach me to love him less, or banish the remembrance of his regard for me. If I have offended, is it thine to take the precious life which the hand of God is alone capable of bestowing? and to whose summons alone, it shall be responsible. Remember! O remember! there

there comes a day, a blessed one for me, a day of Judgment! then shall that all-piercing eye which penetrates even the dark recessess of these caverns, bear witness against ye. Whom God joined together in peace and joy—on whom he had fixed his seal of mercy, ye have savagely presumed to rend assunder: But the hour comes, and comes swiftly, in which ye, even ye, the holy tenants of St. Gabriel, shall wish the object of your revenge and murder, were nigh, to stay the hand of destruction that overwhelms ye. But there is still a more glorious epoch lingering for the record of humanity, in which the dark practices that you adopt, shall be abolished from the civilized face of creation, and their hated name and transgressions remembered but with scorn."

She paused abruptly,—her wild tones died suddenly away along the hollow

cavities

cavities of the rock—so sad, so solemn, so awful, was the cadence, that the Nuns crossed themselves with fear—there was a tone too of prophecy, hanging upon her accents, which chilled the Abbot's blood, and he questioned her still further—but reason and recollection appeared at once to have deserted her mind, and she made him no reply.

The Abbess, now motioning with her hand, Anselmo approached the coffin, and scattering dust thereon, the aged Abbot arose to breathe his malediction to the insensible victim, but his parched tongue refusing its abominable office, he caught the arm of a Friar, and accompanied by all, save Julia and Anselmo, as fast as age would permit, hurried fr m the dungeon. A momentary gleam of light flashed across Julia's mind as they retired—wildly she gazed upon Anselmo—the Fiend was in his face—the

instrument of death uplifted in his ruthless hand—Julia felt not the blow, for ere her lip could pronounce the name of Ulric, the grim King of Terrors had arrested its force, and severed the cordage of her broken heart. Bluely gleamed the midnight lightning through the dark, frowning cloisters of St. Gabriel, and the chilling scream of secret death was heard—the inhabitants of the Monastery, tremblingly left their pallets to tell their beads; and a solemn mass was chaunted in the Chapel, for repose of a perjured Nun—while the impious hands which her blood had purpled, were upheld for approbation, at the Altar of an offended Deity.

During these dark transactions, Ulric became more reconciled to fate; that impulse which at first had tempted him to meditate on an act of self-destruction, now instilled into his harrowed breast, the

the thirst of revenge. A gloomy and oppressive weight hung heavily upon his peace, and the bleeding form of Julia was ever before him—"Boy" would he exclaim, to the little motherless Valentine, "I will have *vengeance* though my whole life be devoted to its attainment; I know how the pure blood of thy better parent has been forfeited, but theirs shall, ere long, offer atonement to her ghost.—" Attentively listening, the unconscious child, Hannibal like, instinctively seemed to inherit the feelings of its father, and the earliest, half-formed accent of its cherub lip, affected the word *vengeance.*

One evening, as Ulric was pensively seated at the root of a wide-spreading oak tree in the forest; his eyes bent upon the ground, and his whole soul absorbed in contemplating the virtues of his lost wife, a shadow suddenly

flitted

flitted past, and raising his head, he beheld the figure of Kenard, Captain of the Banditti, gazing earnestly upon him.

"Good morrow" cried the Robber, "I rejoice that the kindness of this world is so auspicious, as to admit thy tranquil repose at such an hour and in a solitude so inviting."

"Alas" interrupted Ulric, with a deep drawn sigh, "you mistake my situation, since even now, was I ruminating on the injustice and absurd cruelty of mankind."

"I" answered Kenard, have just grounds, it is true, for such complaint; but you, surely, who of late professed yourself so happy and contented, have no reason for regret."

"When I did so, Kenard, I was what

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I was what I declared myself; but times are strangely changed since last we met—the violator has broken in upon my hour of joy, and desolated, with remorseless hands, the domestic hearth, of my then peaceful dwelling; which neglected and in ruins, becomes a retreat for the coiled serpent and grey lizard, reptiles, less injurious, less venomous in their natures, than the iron-hearted zealots who wrought its fall."

Ulric now proceeded to relate each circumstance which had attended himself and Julia, till the unhappy hour in which dark and incomprehensible fate, directed the monks of St. Gabriel to their retreat. A tear, stealing down the sunburnt and manly cheek of the Bandit, as he attentively listened to the agonized husband's tale, proved, however rugged his exterior frame might seem, it contained a heart feelingly alive to the distresses of others; and putting

forth his hand, as Ulric concluded; "come with me" said he, "mankind has long enough persecuted you—tis now your turn to persecute mankind.—Were it not too late to effect the rescue of your Julia—our band is strong—and brave——"

"Say that you will aid my *revenge*," cried Ulric, with quickness, "and I am your slave for ever."

"Enough! I swear, it let us from this moment become friends.

"Most readily, but I cannot accompany you to night; my son, Julia's son, must be provided for; to morrow, therefore, at the hour of noon, expect me on this spot!—"

"Farewell!" replied Kenard, "till to morrow."

Ulric slowly returned to the cabin of his neighbour—his mind fully occu-

pied

pied with the rash project it had formed; and retiring early to his chamber, he wrote a letter of unusual length to Reginald—when, drawing aside the curtain of Valentine's couch and hanging tenderly over the sleeping boy, whose features forcibly reminded him of Julia, he sank gradually upon his knees, and, dissolved in tears, offered up a prayer to the great Disposer of Events, to bless his son: and, however faulty Ulric may appear, shall we doubt the acceptance of his orisons, when be consider the agitated state of his mind, and remember them only, as the benedictions of an injured father on the head of his unoffending offspring.

Scarcely had the earliest beam of the morning sun, darting through the clustering woodbine which overgrew the lattice of Ulric's apartment, spread its cheering influence around, ere, rising

 from

from his bed, and directing the paper to his brother, he descended with Valentine on his arm, in order to partake the homely meal of his hospitable host—the idea of parting from his child communicated a pang to his breast, till then unfelt—although the latent purpose of his soul still burnt with increasing force. However, as the moment of separation approached, grasping the peasant's hand, Ulric informed him, that affairs of a particular nature, would require his absence for a length of time, and, as circumstances might transpire, perhaps, for *ever*;'therefore' continued he. "my worthy friend, should six months elapse and I neither come, nor send, conclude that I am lost, or fallen in battle:—then, let this packet, with Valentine, be conveyed to Reginald, Earl St. Julien—perhaps, he may prove to my Son, what he has never been to me.' much affected, he again encircled the

Child

Child in his arms, bathed him with tears of affection, and forcing into the Peasant's hand his little stock of wealth, prepared to depart.

"No, no," cried the distressed Woodman, putting down the money, "you are unfortunate—I consider it my duty towards heaven to obey your commands, with no better recompence than the approbation of mine own conscience. To what place you are going, God and yourself only know, and I hope for the sake of this dear child, the design within you is not desperate."

Ulric instantly glanced at the Cottager's meaning, and casting on him a look of gratitude, "if I fall not" said he, "beneath the triumph of my enemies, believe me, I shall again seek this valley, the only earthly spot I prize."

pursuit of her; having ran, however, to a considerable distance from the Castle of St. Julien, she paused beneath the extensive branches of a sheltering tree, where, ready to sink with fatigue, she seated herself on the grass, and gave free indulgence to her tears.

At length, the rosy streak of light in the eastern sky, and the perfume of numberless flowers steeped in the silver dews of morning, awoke her recollection and induced her to wander on, least the Vassals of the Castle should overtake her, and restore her to the dreaded arms, from which she had so recently escaped.

On the evening of the second day, having received no other nourishment than such as the wild brambles afforded, forlorn and weary, she sat on the margin of a mossy-bordered stream, and earnestly prayed for death: the last rays of the

setting

setting sun were sinking behind the foliage, and the dark clouds of the northern sky, towering into uncouth forms, frowned awfully portentous of a midnight storm.

"Alas!" sighed the unhappy Matilda, "must this turf become my unknown bier? O Evlin! little thinks't thou on the agony I endure—little dreamst thou of my wanderings in this pathless wilderness, wherein I have no prospect but of perishing: haply thou deem'st me faithless to my vows—the willing partner of St. Julien's greatness, and learns't thy tongue to curse my hapless name."

While she thus continued to deplore her misfortunes, distantly howled the loud thunder, and already the vivid lightning glimmered through the trees. "O God!" exclaimed the Fugitive, "no

house, no home, no succour!" and casting her hopeless eyes around, the figure of a venerable old man, leaning on his staff, excited her attention; a burst of exquisite joy, at the sight of a human being escaped the lips of Matilda as he approached, and throwing herself at his feet, she earnestly besought his pity.

With some degree of surprise, the Hermit raised her from the earth, and meekly enquiring into the cause of her sorrow Matilda, related to him the reason of her appearance in a place, so ill according with her high rank; and the circumstances attending her clandestine marriage; but, recollecting the stern injunction of her Father, she ventured not, at first, to disclose either her own name or that of Evlin.

The richness of Matilda's apparel, however, bespoke the truth of her asser-

tions. "Lean on me" cried the silver-haired Recluse, "that I may conduct you towards my cell, which is not far distant, and in which you may remain undiscovered." The fair wanderer gratefully accepted the proposal, and accompanied him to his habitation, situated in one of the most intricate parts of the forest. It was no regular mansion, such as men generally frequent, but a cavern hollowed out of the rock, with much art, being divided into several apartments of the most convenient order. The entrance to this hermitage, opened upon a small and verdant lawn, bordered with craggs, on the tops of which, hanging shrubs and oak-branches wrought an impenetrable barrier—a streamlet of clear water, gliding, from some secret source, down the rocks, entered a cave on the opposite side, through which it was necessary for the tenants of the Hermit's dwelling to pass: a rude boat how-

ever, readily stemmed the torrent and conveyed Matilda and her guide to the strand.

There was somthing, so bewitching, so fascinating in this solitude,that it cast a pleasingly serene sensation over Matilda's bosom—so lone, so tranquil it seemed, that even the wood robin, unmindful of their approach, sat calmly on the cowering spray, and sweetly piped its hymn of thankfulness. During this time, the threatening storm had retreated and twilight thrown her vesper mantle over surrrounding objects, not less lovely in their gloom. "Ah!" thought Matilda with a sigh, "in the society of Evlin, how happily could I pass my days in this peaceful seclusion, no distractions of human greatness, could molest our peace—no envy of earhtly malice destroy our joys." her reflections were here interrupted by the

Hermit

Hermit exclaiming, "Zelinda! dear Zelinda! I have brought thee an unexpected guest."

At these words, a matron, attired in deep mourning, made her appearance from the cell, she observed Matilda with some degree of attention, but not with rudeness; and, on being informed of her situation by the Seer, stretched forth her hand with a smile of welcome.

The benevolent strangers persuaded Matilda to retire early to repose, since the pale and haggard look of her cheek proclaimed how much she was overcome by fatigue. On the following morning, Zelinda found her feverish and dejected; she endeavoured to rise, but in vain, and many months elapsed, ere, in defiance of human efforts, the gentle, suffering Matilda, was a ain able to leave her couch.

With



With the first dawn of health and reason, arose early to her recollection, the remembrance of her husband, and confiding in Zelinda, she expressed a wish that he could be apprized of her situation, and the immutability of her vows. The amiable woman, ready to comply with any thing which could restore peace to the bosom of her guest, informed her of some Woodcutters, residing on the borders of the forest, to which the Hermit would repair, early in the morning, and request one of them to convey a message from her to Evlin Overjoyed at a prospect which promised so fair a reward for all her past miseries, Matilda rapturously imprinted a kiss on the Matron's cheek, and instantly retired to address an epistle, filled with tenderness, to her husband: nor sooner had aspiring Phæton ascended his golden chariot, than the Hermit repairing to some trusty Peasant, commissioned

missioned him, with a suitable reward, to deliver the letter safe into those hands for which it was designed.

At the entrance to the hermitage, a rugged bench and stone table, which stood beneath the overhanging rock, afforded a pleasing and cool retreat from the scorching rays of the summer sun. " In this enchanting retirement Matilda delighted to share the converse and frugal meal of her hosts. The wild, pink-clad thyme, and the tufts of yellow flowers scattered around, breathing their balmy perfume, exalted, with voluptous emotion, the soul to extatic de-delight; while the witcheries of the rude-ly natural landscape, added to the half-heard gurgling of the partially seen, silver winding waters, impressed forcibly upon the enquiring mind, a due sense of admiration towards the great God of Nature.

Fain

"Fain would I learn," said Matilda as they sat at their usual repast, "how a spot so lovely, so bewitching, and which, from its almost inaccessible barrier, nature appeared to reserve for her own fantastic bower, should have attracted your earliest observation." The Hermit, smiling at her request, kindly offered not only to relate the cause of his becoming an inhabitant of the cell, but the adventures of his past life, which might serve to divert the mind of his guest till the arrival of her anxiously expected Evlin. Matilda charmed with such unusual marks of confidence in a stranger, offered him her thanks for the indulgence, and he commenced as follows.

THE HERMIT'S STORY.

My Father, Baron Fitz Alan, was a nobleman of high estate; and renowned

renowned in the annals of his country both by the towering height of ancestry and the illustrious fame of his own warlike deeds.

My Mother, who I have understood possessed all the requisites of a great and noble mind, died in giving birth to me, and from which unhappy circumstance I may date the period of my misfortunes; since my Father, who was passionately attached to his wife, might, at her gentle instigation have been content to look with less severity on the errors of his only son.

From the decease of my Mother, I shall pass over a lapse of twenty summers, spent in the insensible felicity of childhood, and the follies of youth; at the termination of which I was suddenly summoned from my travels, in order to solicit the fair hand of a rich

and powerful Heiress, whose lands lay contiguous to those of Fitz Allan Castle. I confess the respect which I entertained for the author of my existence, was very distant from inspiring me with a desire to comply with the peculiar nature of his commands, since, instead of readily acquiescing to them, I unhesitatingly refused even to behold the lady his kindness had selected to render me happy; which incensed the Baron to such a voilent degree, that he not only threatened to disinherit, but to cast me off for ever.

. . . .

In a few days after, however, he again sent for me to his apartment, but judge of my surprise, when in opposition to the rules of all common order, I found him attended, not merely by the Guardian, but by the Lady Isabella herself, who unconscious of the deception imposed upon her, had been requested

quested by Lord Fitz Allan to enter his mansion under pretences of a nature totally foreign to the actual design. That Isabella had charms, it would be impossible to deny, but the thwarting spirit of youth had so steeled my breast against them, that it was not probable, the stratagem, to effect which the Baron had been at such considerable pains, would in the least tend to accelerate our union.

On the departure of his guests, the Baron eagerly demanded my opinion of Isabella. With some degree of consternation, I replied, that my inclinations were not so much indulged as those of the vassals around me, who, at least, had the felicity of selecting partners for themselves. "Surely, my Lord," exclaimed I, " it is a snbject of no mean consideration—is it possible for me to state, how far the inclinations and sen-

sentiments

timents of the Lady Isabella may coincide with mine—would it not be rash to bestow my hand where my heart could not accompany? would it be honourable.'

For some time my Father continued silently listening to my remontrances; at length, his stern eye flashing fire, and haughtily rising from his seat, "boy!" cried he, "wilt thou presume to dictate? thou——but why do I debase myself, by stooping to your absurd propensities—is it not sufficient for me to dictate? you know on what conditions alone I can hearken to your conversation, or consent to shelter you beneath these walls." He was now preparing to quit the apartment, but grasping his robe, "stay, my Lord," I cried. "let us not part thus; however religiously I might be inclined to observe your rigid mandate, a solemn and imprudent vow, made in the impulse of passion, never

to wed, till I had witnessed twenty-three summers, prevents me."

"Where made and to what object?" interrupted the Baron, with a look of mistrustful scorn.

"The spot is sacred, the object lost, and the vow inviolable." replied I.

"Far be it from me," continued he, in a subdued tone, "to enquire into the nature of your extravagant secrets, it is sufficient for me, if at the termination of that period, you will be willing to comply with my wishes."

Thus foiled, with the result of my own stratagem, I had no other resource but agreement; however, as there were yet, three summers to look forward, I hoped, ere the expiration of that time, some particular incident might take place, either to alter the resolutions of my Father, or render the Lady Isabella deaf to his proposals.

I shall not dwell upon each particular occurrence, but merely state, that after some little hesitation, Fitz Alan's overtures to Isabella, through the representation of her Guardian, so far prevailed, that she consented to give me her hand. I must confess it occasioned me some disagreeable sensations to impose on the amiable qualities of this young lady, since to have loved her would have been no difficult task, but for the recollection of the apparent force exercised over my inclinations; however, as I had not completed my travels, in obedience to the Baron's commands, I again prepared to quit the mansion of my birth, and even Isabella, with a degree of regret.

Some time had elapsed, and the vessel in which I had embarked was swiftly conveying me to other climes, when a midnight storm suddenly arose. So dark,

so

so terrible, were the elements, that as the torches' glare played across the features of the Mariners, I could perceive them pale with emotions of horror and despair. O! then did I repent my own rashness, for which I had fallen to destruction, and inwardly repine at the overbearing spirit that induced me to resign my home, and the yielding hand of Isabella: but, alas! my reflections were of short duration, for a sudden wave breaking in upon the vessel, bore me, with inveterate force, along the world of sea; at first, overwhelmed with the unexpected blow, I was fast sinking into eternity, till a momentary gleam of reason awoke me to a sense of danger, and excited my exertions to the first law of nature, self preservation— long and fearful was the struggle; at length, totally exhausted, I sunk faint- on a bed of rocks, towards which alone, the hand of Providence, in that awful night must have conveyed me. For

For some time my benumbed faculties disdained to perform their accustomed offices; at last, offering up a prayer to heaven, I anxiously gazed around for my Companions in adversity—Holy Virgin! shall I, can I ever forget that heart-rending scene! a wildness, so dismal, so solemn, overcast the face of creation, that the red thundrebolt and the blue glimmering lightning, as they rent the low, pitchy clouds, served by their transcient light, to reflect additional hideousness on the writhing waters, which. towering into mountainous forms, tossed their foamy heads to the skies, and seemed, in savage roars, to mock the yelling tempest as it burst upon their presumption; while the labouring vessel, by a light yet bickering in one of her cabins, might frequently be traced, now lifted high in air, now buried in the liquid steep,; till a flash, which came like the crash of worlds, involved

involved at once her feeble efforts, as the perishing cries of her crew (madly clinging to the sinking masts for life) filled up the momentary calm with more distracting sounds than the stormy roarings of offended nature.

What my emotions were as such a forlorn moment, can only be conceived by persons in similar distress. I felt that I had acted the part of a disobedient, ungrateful child, and that the fatal result had fallen on mine own devoted head, while the acute remorse of my mind, and the miseries of my situation, were rendered doubly poignant by the conviction that they were merited; these melancholy reflections however, were subdued by fatigue, and, in spite of the impending perils which o'erhung me, I unconsciously reclined on my cold, flinty couch to repose; and so calm, so exquisite was the slumber, that orient day had

thrown her golden mantle over the wide expanse of heaven ere I awoke.

Ah! how changed was the wizard scene! smooth as a mirror slept the silent deep—not even a passing zephyr presumed to kiss its subdued bosom.—All around seemed one broad sheet of sky-reflecting water, the craggy Island, on which I was cast, appearing the only earthly speck on the face of creation, and I its lone tenant. At first, a prey to agonizing despair, I half-resolved, with impious ingratitude, to plunge again into the treacherous waters, and seal for ever my woes in the chilling arms of death; but the love of existence, which seldom deserts even the most abject, and the piercing calls of hunger, induced me to venture into the Island. No trace of human being, no voice, save the echo of mine own amid the rocks, offered me consolation. Thus, an outcast from my

fellow

fellow creatures, I learnt the life of a Hermit, with no better repast than the wild fruits of the wildernes—no habitation but the samphire-hanging cliffs.

Long was the time, which, without admitting even the consolations of hope, glided over my solitary reign, with no better enjoyment than the sadly pleasing pictures of memory, or the painful anxiousness of watching, from some beetling eminence, the distantly rising surge; to which, full oft, as the sea bird cowered, mine aching sight would turn, in the fond hope of its being some friendly, adventuring bark, to snatch me from the sorrows of exile: but, as the delusive spray sank to its native level, lamenting the hardness of my destiny, I have frequently sought relief in hopeless tears.

One morning, earlier than usual, having taken my accustomed station on the

summit of the rocks, with indescribable joy I discovered the form of a vessel, from the sides of which, several dark figures descending into an open boat, made for the Island. Transported at once again beholding the resemblance of a human being, hastily running towards the strangers as they landed, I threw myself at their feet, and implored their compassion.

At first, surprised by the wildness of my manners and attire, they recoiled as I approached; but, observing the supplicating attitude in which I still remained, at last they addressed me in a language totally foreign; it was by signs, therefore, I expressed to them my desire of entering their bark, to which, after some little survey of the Island, they consented to convey me.

It was the galley of a Pirate—the

Chief welcomed me on board with unusual marks of condescension, and kindly attentive to my story, (from his acquaintance with the language being fully able to comprehend it) promised by every means in his power to aid me in recovering my country; but alas! that unpropitious fate which hovered over, was not yet satiated with my sufferings, for a very short space beheld the vessel wherein I sailed, surrendered to an enemy, and its wretched crew, including myself, and the Corsair, sold as slaves in the public market place of Constantinople.

The aged merchant, into whose service I had fallen, expressed himself so highly satisfied with my assiduity, that though I endeavoured to inspire him with hopes of infinite gain for my ransome, he would never consent to the proposal; yet, in the course of two years,

materially

materially exalted me from my earliest employment, which was to cultivate the gardens, or with a number of unfortunate companions, attend his person to the Bazars.

Calling me one morning to his sofa, "Hemayæ!" said he, which was the title given me by himself, "since it is my design shortly to unite myself with the beautiful Zelinda, I shall, on that occasion, bestow great privileges on such of my slaves as have by their attention and fidelity deserved them. I need not add that you, from your integrity and diligence will be foremost to receive both my favour and confidence" at these words I was ready to fall at his feet, and solicit for that alone which could have made me happy, leave to return, once again, to that dear, that not forgotten home, for which I deeply sighed. Observing the sudden paleness of my

cheek, Hasrac enquired into the cause. At a loss how to reply least the apparent ingratitude of my inclinations should eventually destroy the few hopes that sometimes fluctuated in my breast, "my Lord" said I, " it is ever the duty of a slave, to rejoice at the happines of his master, but when that happiness comes with kindness to himself, the double extacy is insupportable."

" Virtuous Hemayæ!" exclaimed Hasrac, "thy sensitive nature has not escaped unheeded—be ready in a few hours to attend me to the dwelling of Zelinda, whose fair hand I am desirous should bestow on thee a reward equal to such uncommon merits." He now withdrew from the apartment, leaving me a prey to my own melancholy ruminations till the appointed time, when, entering his palanquin, in all the pomp of magnificence, he repaired to the habitation of

Zelinda. His turban, of the finest muslin, figured with silver, was fastened in front with with a star of blazing jewels, which, in corresponding manner, ornamented in clusters his embroidered and perfumed robes—for me, a vest, and drawers of rose-colour, constituted my attire, my task being to support the ample train of Hasrac as he entered the Harem to salute his Mistress; but scarcely had mine eyes beheld the Sylph-like form of Zelinda, than, dropping the garment from my nerveless arm, I remained motionless, beneath the united influence of love and admiration.

She was reclining on a couch of scarlet and gold, surrounded by her domestics, whose beauty, though unusual, served but to heighten the effect of her own charms. Her raiment, of snowy whiteness, studded with pearls, added to the symmetry of her lovely person, inspired the

the captivated soul with an idea of being in the presence of some Celestial—so sweet, so tender too, were her accents, they fell upon mine ear like the melodious breathings of a love-toned lute; but while lost in extatic transport, I incautiously continued to gaze, Hasrac, suddenly frowning, awoke my bewildered mind to a sense of shame and duty.

The interview, being merely formal, was not of long duration, and Hasrac hastened to his own princely abode fraught with every anticipation of coming joy, while I, the victim of love and wretchedness, sought alone my lowly pallet to weep and sigh unseen. The beauty of Zelinda had made so deep an impression on my heart, that fruitless were all efforts to banish her recollection. In the bitterness of my woe I accused providence of unkindness, and deplored

plored that Isabella had not been Zelinda—my spirits became gradually dejected.- I, of late the most cheerful among my companions, was now the most melancholy, and loved solitude in preference to their mirth or conversation. my songs no longer enlivened their labours or heightened the festivity of their holidays—under various pretences I loved to linger in the most unfrequented solitudes of the gardens, which were only divided from another, surrounding the palace of Zelinda's father, by a wall of unusual height..

One evening, as I sat beneath the friendly shade of a cedar, the voice of some female softly uttering my name, startled me from the gloomy ruminations in which I was enveloped, and gazing wildly around, what was my surprise on beholding a matron, one of Zelinda's attendants, narrowly investigating

ting my features. "Hemayæ!" exclaimed she, at length, "how is it that you avoid the society of your companions, to wander like some forlorn creature through these secluded windings?"

"Alas! Madam" replied I, "however I may seem, I am not alone, there is a form, deeply fixed in my heart, with which I converse and reason."

"Is it the form of her you love?" enquired the attendant.

"Even so" sighed I, "surely then" continued my interrogator, "the mistress of your affections must esteem herself fortunate in so fond and faithful a lover."

"She, alas! madam, is unconscious of my presumption."

"What, if Zelinda were inclined to return thy passion?"

"Zelinda! Lady."

"Be not surprised, Hemayæ, at my

knowledge

knowledge of your secret, when even the very trees are witness to your rashness"--she pointed to the cedar beneath which I had been reclining, and the name of Zelinda, engraved upon the bark, awoke me to a fearful sense of the imprudent abstraction which accompanine own actions.

"Blush not, Hemayte," said she, seeing my embarrasment, "but, at the hour of midnight, if possible, escape unnoticed from your chamber, and meet me on this spot, when I shall conduct you to Zelinda, whose love, perhaps, is only to be equalled by your own;" so saying, she suddenly retired into a bower of myrtle, leaving me a prey to a thousand hopes, fears, and wild conjectures.

Ah! how anxiously did I watch the lingering hours till the time appointed; methought those around me seemed inclined

clined to converse till day break, while inwardly condemning the various subjects of their discourse, I listened painfully for its termination; at last, as all was still, I secretly deserted my pallet and hastened towards the cedar tree in the extremity of Hasrac's gardens. My nocturnal guide was already in attendance, and, as I approached, angrily exclaimed against my suffering her to remain so long. I assured her of my anxiety and the cause, which, so repugnant to my inclinations, detained me.

She now motioned me to follow, and, after gliding through a variety of secret walks, we arrived at the Harem, wherein Zelinda, oppressed with fear, awaited the return of her Governess, Mandane. I instantly threw myself at the feet of my mistress, who raising me up, with tender condescension welcomed me to her presence. "Angel of light," sighed

I "how can thy slave repay such benign goodness?" By continuing to love me, Hemayæ" she replied."

In an ectasy of delicious transport, I called Heaven to witness the purity of my vows—and so soft, so sweet was the mutual exchange of our love, that like the magic influence of a rapturous dream, it seemed but a momentary, heavenly delusion, ere the governess entered to apprize us of the blue-eyed appearance of dawn, which must rend us asunder, or betray us with its envious light. After some little reflection, I tore myself from the object of my adoration, and hurrying back to my apartment unseen, sank into joyous slumbers, wherein the preceding adventure of the night, was again depicted to my love sick imagination.

From this era our interviews became

frequent

frequent, till one fatal night, while I hung fondly on the witching charms of Zelinda, the Governess, pale and almost breathless, rushed into the apartment, and in trembling articulation proclaimed the approach of Hassen, who having received secret information of my being there, was coming, attended by his guards, to punish or destroy me. Zelinda, almost fainting, cast her eyes upon mine and fearfully gazed around for some means of escape, but it was already too late, the angry voice of her father echoed in the adjoining chamber.

Terror struck, I endeavoured to screen myself behind a lattice work covered with fragrant shrubs, when the Governess, suddenly grasping the skirt of my raiment, forcibly drew me back, exclaiming at the same time, in haughty accents. " Ah stay thou perfidious traitor, thou shalt not profane the sanctity of my

my Lord's Harem, while I, his vigilant, eternal vassal, have sufficient strength to struggle against thy presumption!" she now made the place re-echo with her cries for assistance, and suddenly turning to Hassan (who had entered time enough to witness the proceeding) swooned at his feet.

Speechless, I gazed upon the weeping Zelinda, at a loss to comprehend the treacherous conduct of her attendant, till, loading me with heavy chains, the guards in obedience to the furious mandate of their chief, prepared to drag me to confinement: at which, recovering from her state of apparent inanity, "Alla be praised!" faultered the Governess "I have preserved by my exertions, the credit of the sacred trust reposed in me, from the attempts of this young libertine. Last night, my Lord," continued she, addressing herself to Hassan,

"while

while I was reading in the Alcoran, deeds of the faithful, such as Alla loves, raising mine eyes from the sacred volume, I beheld this stranger wandering in the lonely paths of the Harem; but deeming him merely some new attendant on your pleasure, I suddenly forgot him; judge then how great must have been my alarm, on beholding this maniac rush into the presence of myself and Zelinda, while we were yet engaged in our nightly devotions. Whether, my Lord, he fled from your pursuit I know not, since, in the visible terror of his mind, he endeavoured to hide himself behind those roses, as, forgetful of the weakness of this arm, I endeavoured to detain him, till the loudness of my cries might summon assistance."

Hassan, with an air of credulity, gazed earnestly on the Governess, at length "faithful creature!" he cried,

why

why should I doubt the truth of these assertions, since long tried service has proved the integrity of all thy former actions. As for thee, unhappy wretch, son of some abject christian, whatever cause might impel this insult I reck not; confinement, and haply death, must reward thee." I was now dragged from the presence of all I held dear on earth, to a lone dungeon in the remotest turret of the mansion: on my departure, as another has since informed me, the Governess, throwing herself at Hassan's feet wept aloud. "O my Lord" sobbed she, "if I have not acted in conjunction with your wishes, let me die,—let me sink beneath the force of your sabre."

"Arise" replied he, throwing her some pieces of gold, "and with my Zelinda be happy, nor dread again the interruptions of this arrogant slave, of whose entrance into the Harem, I was apprized

apprized by an attendant that observed his approach from the garden of Hasrac." so saying he departed, after embracing his daughter and recommending her to repose.

"O! thou perfiduous and deceitful woman" said Zelinda, scornfully rejecting the offered hand of her attendant, "thinkest thou I can ever give my hand to Hasrac, whose secret reward has thus secured thee to his service; no, Hemayæ, the captive, that yesterday you artfully professed to be the handsomest and most amiable, possesses my fondest love, Guide me ye invisible powers who over-rule the destiny of Hemayœ to the gloomy chamber wherein he sighs beneath the weight of his chains, that I may console and speak peace to his wounded heart—that in spite of surrounding obstacles I may convince him of my unabating passion and live or die with him." "Stay

"Stay, rash girl," cried the Governess, "dry those tears of sorrow I beseech thee, thinks then Zelinda so hardly of my affection, as to suppose me capable of being the thing I seem?—leave the fate of Hemayæ to me—wouldst thou be content to quit thy native land?"

"I would do any thing to preserve the life of my Love and avoid the arms of Hasrac."

"Zelinda," resumed the Governess, "I am myself a Christian,—for many years the ardent wish of returning to my friends has been uppermost in this bosom—a merchant, in whose fidelity we can rely, has offered, for a trifling sum, to afford me any conveyance towards the land of mine and Hemayæ' birth. My husband, an officer of some rank, returning from a long and perillous voyage, was captured by a Turkish Corsair. It is useless now, for

me to ennumerate the peculiar circumstances which placed me in the service of your father, and separated me, for ever, from one I tenderly loved, and of whose fate I am still ignorant. An opportunity now offers for effecting my escape, I shall therefore, dearest Zelinda, lose no time in endeavouring to save Hemayæ, that both thy lover and thyself may render me happy by becoming voluntary partners of my long meditated flight.

Zelinda sank delighted on the bosom of the faithful attendant, and thanking her warmly for the judicious part she had sustained, urged her to lose no time in endeovouring to effect my release from the sorrows of rigid captivity. "I will fly with thee, and my Hemayæ," she cried, "to the utmost verge of the globe, let us hasten therefore to those plains which I have so frequently heard him describe with rapture."

I was lamenting my hard and calamatous life, continued the Hermit to Matilda, on the cold flinty pavement of my dungeon, in an agony of despair, as the sound of secret footsteps suddenly assailed mine ear; a transitory gleam of dismay rushed upon my soul, and and gazing fearfully around, I expected some midnight instrument of Hassan or Hasrac's vengeance, to approach and plunge into my defenceless breast, the knife of untold murder. I hastened, all was still as the awful pause of nature which precedes the thundering burst of a volcano. "They come" thought I, to terminate those miseries which I have so often wished at an end, my heart chilled at the idea—that Philosophy which misfortune had of late rendered my boast, no longer taught me to defy the power of Death. I now beheld the grim tyrant in his formidable approaches, and shrunk with painful apprehension

apprehension from his gelid touch: resolved however not to forfeit existence without a struggle, at the sound of a key inserted in my prison door, I darted from the dank pavement, as far as the ring, to which my chains were fastened would admit, towards the end of the dungeon. Merciful God! when I felt their massy fetters opposing my strength, and mocking the narrow limits of my desperation, the storm of frantic madness came across me—with furious, but fruitless efforts, I essayed to rend assunder the iron links—then, O then! fell the bitter pang of disobedience upon me—the heavy, studded door already began to creak upon its rusty hinges—"Father of mercy!" I ejaculated, "preserve me," and fell senseless to the earth.

Haply this trance had proved fatal, so cold, so still it seemed, but for the friendly aid of that hand whose approach I had so much dreaded.

The pale mist of returning reason began to dissipate the dark chaos which enveloped me. I heard the breathing of something human in mine ear, and felt the warm pressure of mortal hand which enclosed the inanimate coldness of mine own. Light, heavenly light, flashed on my wandering, disordered senses, and casting a look on the features which tenderly o'erhung me, the venomous glance of a Basilisk could not have driven with more inveterate force the ice back to my reanimating heart—it was the Governess of Zelinda, and hastily snatching my arm from her support, "woman!" I exclaimed, "is not the measure of thy rancour complete? but thou comest thus, like the handmaid of Lucifer, sighs in thy bosom, tears in thine eyes, to torture me again, even after the quiet slumber of the grave, had placed, methought, its leaden seal upon me?"

"O talk not thus wildly my poor Hemayæ!" answered she with a look of compassion which almost disarmed my resentment " I come to bring thee comfort!"

Comfort!" I ejaculated, "sorceress! such comfort as thou broughts't me to the cedar tree in the garden of Hasrac? hence with thy spangled net, deluder hence! let me not hear of my Zelinda's marriage—leave me to die alone and broken hearted, and I'll not curse thee woman, in thy guilt!"

"Reproach me not Hemayæ,till thou knowst me, behold this ring,tis Hassan's honoured signet, away, with me, the hour of midnight struggles with the blushing morn."

"No, though the precious light of day, and all the witching spells of na-

 ture's

ture's dearest transports led thee on, I would not follow. Here can I die content—this vault my sepulchre—thou shalt not mock my voluntary step to the red axe, which waits to shed my blood."

"O Hemayæ! save thyself and me—snatch thy Zelinda from the arms of Hasrac—how could'st thou bear to see her in thy rival's possession? or witness her last sad virgin look at thee, of anguish and reproach." At these words, my soul became suddenly enflamed with love and jealousy, when, taking the key from Mandane's hand, I unlocked my fetters, and, however I might have preferred death to any other object, without Zelinda, prepared to follow wherever my guide thought proper to direct.

Having passed the guard, by means

of

the signet, which, together with the keys of my prison, the Governess had stolen from Hassan's chamber, I followed to the solitary hut of a Fisherman, which overhung the deep—in an instant Zelinda was in my arms—I felt her warm cheek glowing against mine—I tasted the balmy sweetness of her lip once again, and was happy. "Let us lose no time, my children," cried the Governess, "the first hours of morning have glided past—we must not tarry here." A boat being in readiness, we immediately entered it, and were rapidly conveyed to a vessel some leagues out at sea, and already under sail for Italy. It would be impossible for me to give a description equal to the transport I enjoyed on this delightful voyage—every breath of wind wafted me towards that home which I had so ungratefully deserted—for which act of disobedience I had so severely suffered. My mind

figured to itself the delight of my father, at once again beholding me, after so long an absence—his admiration of my beautiful Zelinda, and approbation of the choice I had made.

Arrived, at length, on the borders of of Italy, we resolved, in order to enjoy the nameless beauties of this romantic Country, accompanied by proper guides, to journey by land and meet the vessel at another point, from which the Captain intended to prolong his voyage towards England.

Fain would I terminate my sad story in the short-lived enjoyment which we experienced in this delightful land, as, wandering through forest, mead, and dale, we contemplated the serene beauties of an Italian summer sky, or beheld, through distant openings in the foliage, the elevation of some proud Castello,

and witnessed with emotions of awe and admiration, the cloud-sourced cataract bursting above our heads—but my narrative, as it lingers towards a close, opens again the wounds of unforgotten misfortune.

Let me, therefore, dwell briefly upon the period of my arrival at the Castle of Fitzalan. My Father was still living; but, on receiving the unpleasing intelligence of my marriage with Zelinda, refused to see me, and denied that welcome, which, as his son, I had a right to expect. The aged Steward alone, beheld my reception with tears; and at the intercession of this worthy man, I received from my father a trifling sum, with which I retired, still happy, in the enjoyment of Zelinda's love, to a lonely cottage near the dwelling of the Governess; whose husband escaped from a variety of troubles, yet lived to rejoice at, and welcome her return.

In this manner we continued for a length of time, in which Zelinda gave birth to a son, endowed with all its Mother's charms; but, alas! as the Child grew in years, one fatal day, playing on the borders of a neighbouring forest, the wild flowers seduced his wandering feet among the briary underwood, and ere his shrieking mother who sat watching his innocent gambols, could extricate him from the wilderness, he had suddenly fallen through some secret cavity of an ancient mine, and disappeared for ever. In vain were our cries upon his name, in vain did we endeavour to explore with torches the subterranean cavern; no clue which might lead to a discovery of his fate could be attained. Ah! lady, if I had before tasted deeply of sorrow, it now appeared that I was doomed to swallow its bitterest dregs; for what can equal that anguish, which the inconsolable distraction of a

wife

wife, lamenting her offspring's fall, effects upon the mind of an adoring husband; or the conviction that his hapless child rests unburied, on the same dark rock where it had expired—no mother's tear to dew its icy cheek; no father's hand to close its lifeless eyes.

Overwhelmed by the loss of her favorite, and the deranged state of my Zelinda's mind, the Governess did not long survive.—My Father too, unforgiving to the last, before death, surrendered his property into the hands of strangers, allowing only a small income to supply my wants, till the lost Heir of Fitz Alan should be discovered. Thus unhappy, wandering forlornly in these forests, this solitary spot excited my admiration, and I resolved to make it my habitation.—Twenty years have glided away; time it is true, has restored the senses of Zelinda; but what, ah what! shall restore

the treasure we once possessed? age, with rapid strides, already begins to overtake us, and we have now learnt to bend with humble resignation to the awful dispensations of Providence, and to look forward with hope for a bright reward hereafter.

Thus the Hermit ended his story, but ere Matilda could thank him for the sadly pleasing amusement it had afforded, the sound of a horn echoed through the cavern of the stream, and Evlin appeared with his attendants, on the opposite bank; in a few moments, by the assistance of the bark, he had crossed the current and caught her in transport to his breast, while Fitzalan and Zelinda, rejoicing in the happiness of their guests, beheld the passing scene with emotions of heartfelt satisfaction.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Matilda, starting

ing and gazing on Evlin, with some degree of apprehension, "what means this sable garb, which, in the thrill of rapture, had escaped my observation—why droops my lord at this enquiry?—O! trifle not with my feelings, but tell me, Evlin, tell me, what it means." With all the tenderness he could summon, Evlin imparted to her an account of the sudden indisposition and death of her Father—bursting into tears, she concealed her face upon his shoulder—it was some consolation to learn, that with his dying lips her parent had not only pardoned, but blessed the union of herself and Evlin.

" Be comforted my child, said the Hermit," since you have no cause to reproach yourself; death is a tribute we must all submit to, and, perhaps, duly considered, would leave less impression of regret on the survivor's mind. Hea-

ven, lady, if it bereaves you of a father, with the same hand restores you a husband—whose looks, if I read aright, beam with lasting affection."

Evlin thanked the Hermit for his kindness, and uniting in his persuasions to Matilda, she became resigned, and, on the following day, was enabled to share in domestic conversation. The cell, being adorned with several Turkish portraits, which had formerly belonged to the Governess, they excited, from their masterly execution, the admiration of Evlin. Fitzalan, ready to resort to any means which might serve to divert the sadness of Matilda's spirits, proposed shewing them several rich miniatures, preserved in a curious cabinet of ebony, in an adjoining apartment; but, no sooner had he produced the first, a likeness of Zelinda's mother, than Evlin, gazing wildly upon it, turned pale.

" What ails my lord ?" enquired Matilda, with dismay.

" That picture! that picture!" ejaculated Evlin.

"'Tis the likeness of my mother !"exclaimed Zelinda.

" I also wear that resemblance" cried he, snatching from his bosom a painting set in brilliants.

Zelinda gazed wildly on the design, " tell me" said she, "for heaven's sake tell me, by what means this portrait fell into your hands ?"

" It was found on my neck while a babe."

" Found there?" exclaimed Fitzalan.

" Even so, for I am not, as my Matilda supposes, the actual son of Lord de Granville, but, was discovered by that nobleman when hunting in these very forests, sleeping in a rude cavern, to which he had retired, in order to a-

void the inclemency of a coming storm; my innocence, and unusually rich apparel, excited his warmest interest in my behalf, and, raising me, still slumbering, in his arms, he conveyed me to the castle of his ancestors, wherein, up to this moment, beneath his paternal smile, I have lived in ignorance of the authors of my birth."

Zelinda fainted, at this avowal, in Matilda's arms—while Fitzalan, clasping Evlin to his breast, acknowledged him by the endearing epithet of son. At length, opening her eyes "Ah!" cried Zelinda "let me hear once more those rapturous sounds, or give me back to death—then, tenderly gazing on Evlin, it is, it is my child," sobbed she, "this picture—these looks confess it—come to thy mother's heart, we will not part again."

From this glad period nothing but thankfulness, congratulation and joy, ensued in the cavern; and, speedily, accompanied by their parents, the young couple hastened to take possession of the extensive domains both of Fitzalan and Ormond.

Ulric, filled with sorrow, hurried towards that part of the forest in which he had appointed to meet the Bandit, and found him stretched along the underwood, anxiously expecting his arrival. "Welcome!" cried the Chief, starting from the ground as Ulric appeared, "I began to suspect, by your long absence, the fickle goddess Fortune of having assumed some more pleasing appearance to detain you from us."

For some time Ulric remained silent and melancholy; the Robber, though an outlaw, and accustomed to scenes

of

of horror wanted not feeling to anticipate the emotions which harrowed up his soul; and, as they sped through the green forest, neither mocked his sufferings by illustrations of singular fortitude, or proved the bleeding wounds of his heart by the officious aid of mistimed consolation.

Arriving at length at the ruins, Kenard, taking Ulric by the arm, entered through a small dark arch, half hidden in ivy, and placing his hand on the mutilated figure of a sculptured knight, it suddenly receded from his touch, and discovered a secret pannel which opened into a subterranean passage leading to the cavern of Bantitti.

On the entrance of their leader, the Robbers, who were assembled in their usual manner, welcomed the return of their former guest, and loudly inviting him

him to share in their heartless mirth, filled high the foaming goblet, in testimony of their good fellowship towards him. At first, the restraint of anguish divided his attention from their rugged esteem, but the ardour with which they promised to revenge his injuries, as the Chief related the account, inspired his burning breast with enthusiastic regard; and, taught by the example, as induced by the intreaties of Kenard, he began to drown the remembrance of happier days and dearer objects, in copious draughts of the mellow grape, and the noisy glee of his companions.

The Bandit Chief, rejoiced at the nervous re-animation of his guest, still pledged him in the lucious cup, and calling on one of his attendants, "bring hither your harp, Gregory," he exclaimed, "and let us have the old Romaunt."

The Minstrel, in ready obedience to the mandate, taking his rude instrument from the wall, instantly commenced the following wild legend, in a strain of unskilled harmony.

LEGEND

OF THE

Skeleton Bride.

A BARON'S fair daughter, so blooming, so gay,
Was lov'd by ENRICO, the Chief of the vale—
Her voice was more soft than the Nightengale's lay
As it fill'd the brief pause in his heart-melting tale:
"I swear that I love thee, dear IMMA" he cried—
"I swear that none other shall come to my bed;
"For where is the knight might not envy the pride
"Of the youth who exultingly makes thee his bride—
"Yes, IMMA, I'll love thee, or living, or dead."

"Your words are as wind; answer'd IMMA, "I know—
"Were I on my bier, soon you'd cease to complain—
"Some lovlier damsel wou'd banish your woe,
"And IMMA, alas! be remember'd with pain."
The warmth of his vows and his agonized sighs,
The force of his tears too, she could not withstand—
With blushes like her's the red dawn only vies,
Which glowed while she tremblingly plighted her hand.

The dew-drop is bright, but dissolves in the sun,
The wild rose is fragrant, but fades at its prime!
Man boasts in his youth, but his race is soon run—
And BEAUTY and LOVE are the victims of time.
Nor yet had eighteen witness'd IMMA's fair form,
Or clad in perfetion her youth or her bloom,
Ere shrunk, 'neath the crush of fatality's storm,
Her bosom of transport no longer beat warm,
For IMMA was shrouded and laid in the tomb.

Ah! sad was the Lover, half frantic with woe,
Forlornly he wandered from comfort and rest;—
Long, long was his grief—his recovery slow,
For deep was the wound of despair in his breast.
As length came a Lady delightful to view—
More charming more fair than e'er IMMA had been!
Her lips were like coral—her eyes azure blue,
Shone clear as the sky when reflected in dew;
Nor the handmaids of VENUS mere beauteous were seen.

Too soon the remembrance of IMMA had died,
He sigh'd for this Lady, so 'witching and gay——
He woo'd her! he won her! he call'd her his bride,
And gay were the nuptials—and merry the day.
Now lightly they sank on their pillows of down,
"O joy!" cried the bridegroom, "my cares are all fled—"
But cold was the hand which he held in his own,
While the warmth of her lips, as he kiss'd them, had flown,
And their late balmy sweet seem'd the smell of the dead.

E'en then, as the moon thro' the corridor fell,
O God! what a sight smote his breast with alarm!
Some horrible Fiend, from the dun gloom of hell,
Encircled his waist with its skeleton arm!
The hair on its skull was yet left to the view—
The livid flesh hung on its dark clammy brow:
Its dank shroud was tatter'd and green was its hue—
The nails on its fingers were ghastly and blue—
'Twas IMMA's stern ghost, and he thought on his vow.

Aloud spoke the spectre, "I come as your bride—
I come to partake the repose of your bed;
I'll press your warm heart as I rest by your side,
'Tis mine, and to claim it, I come from the dead,
With madness the chieftain was seiz'd, and he sleeps
Down Roswin's dark aisle where the alder tree grows—
Unheeded by strangers the green lizard creeps—
'Neath where the fell hemlock its venom'd tear weeps—
And his perjured ghost warns you of truth to your vows.

"This marvellous legend," enquired Ulric, seriously, as Gregory concluded, to whom does it relate.?

"Tis of the former inhabitants of these ruins" answered the Captain laughing, "and with such fearful awe do the surrounding peasantry treat its import

import, that not one of them ever presumes to venture within a league of the walls; or, after sun-set, even to turn his distant eye towards the northern turret; in which they say, at midnight, streaming through the dark cross windows, appears a blue quivering flame, and the wild shrieks of the Baron's ghost are heard, as he still struggles, at that lone hour, in the horrible caresses of his skeleton bride.

There is great morality however, continued Ulric deeply sighing, in this rude ballad; vows are better never made, than made to be broken—O Kenard! I have suffered much, and I have beheld others, dearer than myself, while sympathizing in my sorrows, sinking under the burthen of their own—from the committal of this very error.

"You allude, my Friend," replied the

the Robber Chief, "to the calamities of your sainted wife, but your ideas seem falling into a false channel: it is not to the importance of dissevered vows that you are to attribute your past misfortunes, but to the perfidy and disappointed aims of diabolical men, who under the cloak of religion,conceal the knife of unknown infamy: and, while they stand forth to reproach the passions of others,are themselves slaves to every sordid vice. Awake from the sluggish grief that overwhelms you—revenge is sweet—yea sweeter than the manna which nurtures the blooming, unseen flower of the wilderness—warmly it gushes through the blood of the injured, and elevates his dejected soul to a proud and arrogant height,from which, in the delicious bitterness of hate, he gazes contemptuously down on the oppressor's short-lived triumph." While Kenard continued to speak, his cheek became

crimson

crimson with animation, and his indignant soul seemed hanging on the language of his tongue; at each word he uttered, Ulric's heart beat violently; the remembrance of his wrongs and of Julia, preyed within him, and, starting from his seat, " bear witness heaven!" he cried, in tumultuous accents, which sounded through the arched cavern, like the knelling thunders of autumn, " bear witness heaven! I will nor sleep, nor rest, till vengeance sate these hands for Julia's blood. Kenard, this purpose to my peace is precious; therefore, I charge you, by the promise given, make no delay, but on with him, the wretched Ulric, on, to retribution."

"This instant, noble sufferer" cried the Chief, snatching a sword from the table and placing it in Ulric's hand, "this instant, let us hence."

Night had now thrown her æthiop mantle

mantle over the deep foliage, beneath which, Ulric and Kenard, heavily armed and attended by their ready followers, approached rapidly the hallowed walls of St. Gabriel. Ulric was much changed both in mind and person, since first, in that Convent, he beheld and loved Julia. Care, regret, and hate, had rapidly bleached his once florid cheek, and the sternly sullen reserve of his features, too plainly indicated the ruthless resolutions of his desperate, despairing, breaking heart.

As they continued to glide onward through the underwood, every turning of which was perfectly known to Kenard, Ulric suddenly perceived a venerable old man, seated beneath the spreading branches of a gossamer tree, whom he recognized as the pilgrim, whose life he had fortunately preserved in the valley. Wishing to avoid the painful explanation

planation which must eventually ensue, he endeavoured to turn away, but Bertram, who instantly recollected his benefactor, calling upon his name, requested he would not depart so abruptly. "Ah!" said he "tell me, my preserver, of your family, in that happy glen which is ever before mine eyes, and to which I am now anxiously returning, in order to spend the remainder of my days calmly therein!"

After a convulsive struggle, Ulric dashed an involuntary tear from his cheek,and grasping the hand of Bertram "friend of my peaceful days" he exclaimed, "the glen you speak of, is no longer the abode of virtuous contentment—the objects which would have joyfully hailed your arrival, are lost for ever.

"Jesu!" cried the pilgrim, "these words! these looks! you freeze my very blood—explain—" "Know

"Know then, good Bertram, that Julia, Agnes. and myself, were fugitives from the rigid Cloister of St. Gabriel; in an evil hour our retreat was discovered—Agnes had paid the forfeit of her vows in death—I alas! was absent, and Julia, the most unfortunate, Julia, became the victim of their rancour."

END OF VOL. I.

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